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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. ROBERT HALL, A.M.

MINISTER OF BROADMEAD CHAPEL, BRISTOL, ENGLAND.

FIRST COMPLETE EDITION;

WITH

A BRIEF MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.....VOL. II.

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FREDERICK J. BETTS,

Clerk of the Southern District of New York.

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MODERN INFIDELITY CONSIDERED,

WITH RESPECT TO ITS

INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY;

IN

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.....St. Paul.

Sunt qui in fortunæ jam casibus, omnia ponant,
Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
Natura volvente vices et lucis, et anni:
Atque ideo intrepidi quæcunque altaria tangunt.....Juv.

PREFACE.

The author knows not whether it be necessary to apologize for the extraordinary length of this sermon, which so much exceeds the usual limits of public discourses; for it is only for the reader to conceive (by a fiction of the imagination, if he pleases so to consider it) that the patience of his audience indulged him with their attention during its delivery. The fact is, not being in the habit of writing his sermons, this discourse was not committed to paper, till after it was delivered; so that the phraseology may probably vary, and the bulk be somewhat extended, but the substance is certainly retained.

He must crave the indulgence of the religious public for having blended so little *theology* with it. He is fully aware the chief attention of a Christian minister should be occupied in explaining the doctrines, and enforcing the duties, of genuine Christianity. Nor is he chargeable, he hopes, in the exercise of his public functions, with any remarkable deviation from that rule of conduct; yet is he equally convinced, excursions into other topics are sometimes both lawful and necessary. The versatility of error demands a correspondent variety in the methods of defending truth; and from whom have the public more right to expect its defence, in opposition to the encroachments of error and infidelity, than from those who profess to devote their studies and their lives to the advancement of virtue and religion. Accordingly, a multitude of publications on these subjects, equally powerful in argument, and impressive in manner, have issued from divines of different persuasions, which must be allowed to have done the utmost honor to the clerical profession. The most luminous statements of the evidences of Christianity, on histor-

ical grounds, have been made; the petulant cavils of infidels satisfactorily refuted; and their ignorance, if not put to shame, at least amply exposed; so that Revelation, as far as truth and reason can prevail, is on all sides triumphant.

There is one point of view, however, in which the respective systems remain to be examined, which, though hitherto little considered, is forced upon our attention by the present conduct of our adversaries, that is, their *influence on society*. The controversy appears to have taken a new turn. The advocates of infidelity, baffled in the field of argument, though unwilling to relinquish the contest, have changed their mode of attack; and seem less disposed to impugn the authority, than to supersede the use of revealed religion, by giving such representations of man and of society as are calculated to make its sanctions appear unreasonable and unnecessary. Their aim is not so much to discredit the pretensions of any particular religion, as to set aside the principles common to all.

To obliterate the sense of Deity, of moral sanctions, and a future world; and by these means to prepare the way for the total subversion of every institution, both social and religious, which men have been hitherto accustomed to revere, is evidently the principal object of modern sceptics; the first sophists who have avowed an attempt to govern the world, without inculcating the persuasion of a superior power. It might well excite our surprise, to behold an effort to shake off the yoke of religion, which was totally unknown during the prevalence of gross superstition, reserved for a period of the world distinguished from every other by the possession of a revelation more pure, perfect, and better authenticated, than the enlightened sages of antiquity ever ventured to anticipate, were we not fully persuaded the immaculate holiness of this revelation is precisely that which renders it disgusting to men who are determined at all events to retain their vices. Our Saviour furnishes the solution: *They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; neither will they come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

While all the religions, the Jewish excepted, which, previous to the promulgation of Christianity, prevailed in the world, partly the contrivance of human policy, partly the offspring of ignorant fear, mixed with the mutilated remains of traditionary revelation, were favorable to the indulgence of some vices, and but feebly restrained the practice of others; betwixt vice of every sort and in every de-

gree, and the religion of Jesus, there subsists an irreconcileable enmity, an eternal discord. The dominion of Christianity being in the very essence of it the dominion of virtue, we need look no farther for the sources of hostility in any who oppose it, than their attachment to vice and disorder.

This view of the controversy, if it be just, demonstrates its supreme importance; and furnishes the strongest plea with every one with whom it is not a matter of indifference whether vice or virtue, delusion or truth, govern the world, to exert his talents in whatever proportion they are possessed, in *contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.* In such a crisis, is it not best for Christians of all denominations, that they may better concentrate their forces against the common adversary, to suspend for the present their internal disputes; imitating the policy of wise states, who have never failed to consider the invasion of an enemy as the signal for terminating the contests of party? Internal peace is the best fruit we can reap from external danger. The momentous contest at issue betwixt the Christian church and infidels, may instruct us how trivial, for the most part, are the controversies of its members with each other; and that the different ceremonies, opinions, and practices, by which they are distinguished, correspond to the variety of feature and complexion, discernible in the offspring of the same parent, among whom there subsists the greatest family likeness. May it please God so to dispose the minds of Christians of every visible church and community, *that Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah Ephraim;* that the only rivalry felt in future may be, who shall most advance the interests of our common Christianity; and the only provocation sustained, that of *provoking each other to love and good works!* When at the distance of more than half a century, Christianity was assaulted by a *Woolston*, a *Tindal*, and a *Morgan*, it was ably supported, both by clergymen of the Established Church, and writers among Protestant Dissenters. The labors of a *Clarke* and a *Butler* were associated with those of a *Doddridge*, a *Leland*, and a *Lardner*, with such equal reputation and success, as to make it evident that the intrinsic excellence of religion needs not the aid of external appendages; but that, with or without a dowry, her charms are of sufficient power to fix and engage the heart.

The writer of this discourse will feel himself happy, should his example stimulate any of his brethren, of superior abilities, to contribute their exertions in so good a cause. His apology for not en-

tering more at large into the proofs of the being of a God,* and the evidences of Christianity,† is, that these subjects have been already handled with great ability by various writers; and that he wished rather to confine himself to one view of the subject—The total incompatibility of sceptical principles with the existence of society. Should his life be spared, he may probably, at some future time, enter into a fuller and more particular examination of the infidel philosophy, both with respect to its speculative principles, and its practical effects; its influence on society, and on the individual. In the mean time, he humbly consecrates this discourse to the honor of that Saviour, who, when the means of a more liberal offering are wanting, commends the widow's mite.

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* See an excellent sermon on Atheism, by the Rev. Mr. *Estlin*, of Bristol, at whose meeting the substance of this discourse was first preached. In the sermon referred to, the argument for the existence of a Deity is stated with the utmost clearness and precision; and the sophistry of *Dupuis*, a French infidel, refuted in a very satisfactory manner.

† It is almost superfluous to name a work so universally known as *Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity*, which is probably, without exception, the most clear and satisfactory statement of the historical proofs of the Christian religion ever exhibited in any age or country.

Cambridge, Jan. 18, 1800.

A

SERMON.

EPHESIANS 2: 12.—WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.

As the Christian ministry is established for the instruction of men, throughout every age, in truth and holiness, it must adapt itself to the ever-shifting scenes of the moral world, and stand ready to repel the attacks of impiety and error, under whatever form they may appear. The church and the world form two societies so distinct, and are governed by such opposite principles and maxims, that, as well from this contrariety, as from the express warnings of Scripture, true Christians must look for a state of warfare, with this consoling assurance, that the church, like the burning bush beheld by Moses in the land of Midian, may be encompassed with flames, but will never be consumed.

When she was delivered from the persecuting power of Rome, she only experienced a change of trials. The oppression of external violence was followed by the more dangerous and insidious attacks of internal enemies. The freedom of inquiry claimed and asserted at the Reformation, degenerated, in the hands of men who professed the principles, without possessing the spirit of the Reformers, into a fondness for speculative refinements; and consequently into a source of dispute, faction, and heresy. While Protestants attended more to the points on which they differed, than to those in which they agreed; while more zeal was employed in settling ceremonies and defending subtleties, than in enforcing plain revealed truths, the lovely fruits of peace and charity perished under the storms of controversy.

In this disjointed and disordered state of the Christian church, they who never looked into the interior of Christianity were apt to suspect, that to a subject so fruitful in particular disputes, must attach a general uncertainty; and that a religion founded on reve-

lation could never have occasioned such discordancy of principle and practice amongst its disciples. Thus infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper and unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of Christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing Christians. It has passed through various stages, each distinguished by higher gradations of impiety; for when men arrogantly abandon their guide, and wilfully shut their eyes on the light of heaven, it is wisely ordained that their errors shall multiply at every step, until their extravagance confutes itself, and the mischief of their principles works its own antidote. That such has been the progress of infidelity, will be obvious from a slight survey of its history.

Lord Herbert, the first and purest of our English *free-thinkers*, who flourished in the beginning of the reign of Charles the First, did not so much impugn the doctrine or the morality of the Scriptures, as attempt to supersede their necessity, by endeavoring to shew that the great principles of the unity of God, a moral government, and a future world, are taught with sufficient clearness by the light of nature. Bolingbroke, and others of his successors, advanced much farther, and attempted to invalidate the proofs of the moral character of the Deity, and consequently all expectations of rewards and punishments; leaving the Supreme Being no other perfections than those which belong to a first cause, or almighty contriver. After him, at a considerable distance, followed Hume, the most subtle, if not the most philosophical of the deists; who, by perplexing the relations of cause and effect, boldly aimed to introduce an universal scepticism, and to pour a more than Egyptian darkness into the whole region of morals. Since his time sceptical writers have sprung up in abundance, and infidelity has allured multitudes to its standard; the young and superficial by its dexterous sophistry, the vain by the literary fame of its champions, and the profligate by the licentiousness of its principles. Atheism, the most undisguised, has at length began to make its appearance.

Animated by numbers, and emboldened by success, the infidels of the present day have given a new direction to their efforts, and impressed a new character on the ever-growing mass of their impious speculators.

By uniting more closely with each other, by giving a sprinkling of irreligion to all their literary productions, they aim to engross the formation of the public mind; and, amidst the warmest professions of attachment to virtue, to effect an entire disruption of morality from religion. Pretending to be the teachers of virtue, and the guides of life, they propose to revolutionize the morals of mankind; to regenerate the world, by a process entirely

new; and to rear the temple of virtue, not merely without the aid of religion, but on the renunciation of its principles, and the derision of its sanctions. Their party has derived a great accession of numbers and strength from events the most momentous and astonishing in the political world, which have divided the sentiments of Europe betwixt hope and terror; and however they may issue, have for the present, swelled the ranks of infidelity. So rapidly, indeed, has it advanced since this crisis, that a great majority on the continent, and in England a considerable proportion of those who pursue literature as a profession,* may justly be considered as the open or disguised abettors of atheism.

With respect to the sceptical and religious systems, the inquiry at present is not so much which is the truest in speculation, as which is the most useful in practice; or, in other words, whether morality will be best promoted by considering it as a part of a great and comprehensive law, emanating from the will of a supreme, omnipotent legislator; or as a mere expedient, adapted to our present situation, enforced by no other motives, than those which arise from the prospects and interests of the present state. The absurdity of atheism having been demonstrated so often and so clearly by many eminent men, that this part of the subject is exhausted, I should hasten immediately to what I have more particularly in view, were I not apprehensive a discourse of this kind may be expected to contain some statement of the argument in proof of a Deity, which, therefore, I shall present in as few and plain words as possible.

When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, shew it to be a contrivance; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. The human eye, for example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight, the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. If there be an inseparable relation betwixt the ideas of a contrivance and a contriver; and it be evident, in regard to the human structure, the designing agent is not man himself, there

* By those who pursue literature as a profession, the author would be understood to mean that numerous class of literary men who draw their principal subsistence from their writings.

must undeniably be some separate invisible being, who is his former. This great Being we mean to indicate by the appellation of Deity.

This reasoning admits but of one reply. Why, it will be said, may we not suppose the world has always continued as it is; that is, that there has been a constant succession of finite beings, appearing and disappearing on the earth from all eternity? I answer, whatever is supposed to have occasioned this constant succession, exclusive of an intelligent cause, will never account for the undeniable marks of design visible in all finite beings. Nor is the absurdity of supposing a contrivance without a contriver diminished by this imaginary succession; but rather increased, by being repeated at every step of the series.

Besides, an eternal succession of finite beings involves in it a contradiction, and is therefore plainly impossible. As the supposition is made to get quit of the idea of any one having existed from eternity, each of the beings in the succession must have begun in time; but the succession itself is eternal. We have then the succession of beings infinitely earlier than any being in the succession; or, in other words, a series of beings running on, *ad infinitum*, before it reached any particular being, which is absurd.

From these considerations it is manifest there must be some eternal Being, or nothing could ever have existed; and since the beings which we behold bear in their whole structure evident marks of wisdom and design, it is equally certain that he who formed them is a wise and intelligent agent.

To prove the unity of this great Being, in opposition to a plurality of Gods, it is not necessary to have recourse to metaphysical abstractions. It is sufficient to observe, that the notion of more than one author of nature is inconsistent with that harmony of design which pervades her works; that it solves no appearances, is supported by no evidence, and serves no purpose, but to embarrass and perplex our conceptions.

Such are the proofs of the existence of that great and glorious Being whom we denominate God; and it is not presumption to say, it is impossible to find another truth in the whole compass of morals, which, according to the justest laws of reasoning, admits of such strict and rigorous demonstration.

But I proceed to the more immediate object of this discourse, which, as has been already intimated, is not so much to evince the falsehood of scepticism as a theory, as to display its mischievous effects, contrasted with those which result from the belief of a Deity, and a future state. The subject, viewed in this light, may be considered under two aspects; the influence of the opposite systems on the principles of morals, and on the formation of char-

acter. The first may be styled their direct, the latter their equally important, but indirect consequence and tendency.

I. The sceptical, or irreligious system, subverts the whole foundation of morals. It may be assumed as a maxim, that no person can be required to act contrary to his greatest good, or his highest interest, comprehensively viewed in relation to the whole duration of his being. It is often our duty to forego our own interest *partially*, to sacrifice a smaller pleasure for the sake of a greater, to incur a present evil in pursuit of a distant good of more consequence. In a word, to arbitrate amongst interfering claims of inclination is the moral arithmetic of human life.—But to risk the happiness of the whole duration of our being in any case whatever, admitting it to be possible, would be foolish; because the sacrifice must, by the nature of it, be so great as to preclude the possibility of compensation.

As the present world on sceptical principles, is the only place of recompense, whenever the practice of virtue fails to promise the greatest sum of present good, cases which often occur in reality, and much oftener in appearance, every motive to virtuous conduct is superseded; a deviation from rectitude becomes the part of wisdom; and should the path of virtue, in addition to this, be obstructed by disgrace, torment or death, to persevere would be madness and folly, and a violation of the first and most essential law of nature. Virtue, on these principles, being in numberless instances at war with self-preservation, never can, or ought to become, a fixed habit of the mind.

The system of infidelity is not only incapable of arming virtue for great and trying occasions, but leaves it unsupported in the most ordinary occurrences. In vain will its advocates appeal to a moral sense, to benevolence and sympathy. In vain will they expatiate on the tranquillity and pleasure attendant on a virtuous course; for it is undeniable that these impulses may be overcome; and though you may remind the offender that in disregarding them he has violated his nature, and that a conduct consistent with them is productive of much internal satisfaction; yet if he reply that his taste is of a different sort, that there are other gratifications which he values more, and that every man must choose his own pleasures, the argument is at an end.

Rewards and punishments, awarded by omnipotent power, afford a palpable and pressing motive which can never be neglected without renouncing the character of a rational creature; but tastes and relishes are not to be prescribed.

A motive in which the reason of man shall acquiesce, enforcing the practice of virtue at all times and seasons, enters into the very essence of moral obligation. Modern infidelity supplies no such

motives; it is therefore essentially and infallibly a system of enervation, turpitude and vice.

This chasm in the construction of morals can only be supplied by the firm belief of a rewarding and avenging Deity, who binds duty and happiness, though they may seem distant, in an indissoluble chain; without which, whatever usurps the name of virtue, is not a principle, but a feeling; not a determinate rule, but a fluctuating expedient, varying with the tastes of individuals, and changing with the scenes of life.

Nor is this the only way in which infidelity subverts the foundation of morals. All reasoning on morals pre-supposes a distinction between inclinations and duties, affections and rules. The former prompt; the latter prescribe. The former supply motives to action; the latter regulate and control it. Hence it is evident, if virtue have any just claim to authority, it must be under the latter of these notions; that is under the character of a law. It is under this notion, *in fact*, that its dominion has ever been acknowledged to be paramount and supreme.

But, without the intervention of a superior will, it is impossible there should be any moral laws, except in the lax metaphorical sense in which we speak of the laws of matter and motion. Men being essentially equal, morality is, on these principles, only a stipulation, or silent compact, into which every individual is supposed to enter, as far as suits his convenience, and for the breach of which he is accountable to nothing but his own mind. His own mind is his law, his tribunal, and his judge!

Two consequences, the most disastrous to society, will inevitably follow the general prevalence of this system; the frequent perpetration of great crimes, and the total absence of great virtues.

1. In those conjectures which tempt avarice or inflame ambition, when a crime flatters with the prospect of impunity, and the certainty of immense advantage, what is to restrain an atheist from its commission? To say that remorse will deter him, is absurd; for remorse, as distinguished from pity, is the sole offspring of religious belief, the extinction of which is the great purpose of the infidel philosophy.

The dread of punishment, or infamy, from his fellow-creatures, will be an equally ineffectual barrier; because crimes are only committed under such circumstances as suggest the hope of concealment; not to say that crimes themselves will soon lose their infamy and their horror, under the influence of that system which destroys the sanctity of virtue, by converting it into a low calculation of worldly interest. Here the sense of an ever-present Ruler, and of an avenging Judge, is of the most awful and indispensable necessity; as it is that alone which impresses on all crimes

the character of *folly*, shews that duty and interest in every instance coincide, and that the most prosperous career of vice, the most brilliant successes of criminality, are but an *accumulation of wrath against the day of wrath.*

As the frequent perpetration of great crimes is an inevitable consequence of the diffusion of sceptical principles; so, to understand this consequence in its full extent, we must look beyond their immediate effects, and consider the disruption of social ties, the destruction of confidence, the terror, suspicion, and hatred, which must prevail in that state of society in which barbarous deeds are familiar. The tranquillity which pervades a well ordered community, and the mutual good offices which bind its members together, is founded on an implied confidence in the disposition to annoy; in the justice, humanity, and moderation of those among whom we dwell. So that the worst consequence of crimes is, that they impair the stock of public charity and general tenderness. The dread and hatred of our species would infallibly be grafted on a conviction that we are exposed every moment to the surges of an unbridled ferocity, and that nothing but the power of the magistrate stood between us and the daggers of assassins. In such a state, laws, deriving no support from public manners, are unequal to the task of curbing the fury of the passions; which, from being concentrated into selfishness, fear, and revenge, acquire new force. Terror and suspicion beget cruelty, and inflict injuries by way of prevention. Pity is extinguished in the stronger impulse of self-preservation. The tender and generous affections are crushed; and nothing is seen but the retaliation of wrongs, the fierce and unmitigated struggle for superiority. This is but a faint sketch of the incalculable calamities and horrors we must expect, should we be so unfortunate as ever to witness the triumph of modern infidelity.

2. This system is a soil as barren of great and sublime virtues as it is prolific in crimes. By great and sublime virtues are meant, those which are called into action on great and trying occasions, which demand the sacrifice of the dearest interests and prospects of human life, and sometimes of life itself. The virtues, in a word, which, by their rarity and splendor, draw admiration, and have rendered illustrious the character of patriots, martyrs and confessors. It requires but little reflection to perceive, that whatever veils a future world, and contracts the limits of existence within the present life, must tend, in a proportionable degree, to diminish the grandeur, and narrow the sphere of human agency.

As well might you expect exalted sentiments of justice from a professed gamester, as look for noble principles in the man whose hopes and fears are all suspended on the present moment, and

who stakes the whole happiness of his being on the events of this vain and fleeting life. If he be ever impelled to the performance of great achievements in a good cause, it must be solely by the hope of fame; a motive which, besides that it makes virtue the servant of opinion, usually grows weaker at the approach of death; and which, however it may surmount the love of existence in the heat of battle, or in the moment of public observation, can seldom be expected to operate with much force on the retired duties of a private station.

In affirming that infidelity is unfavorable to the higher class of virtues, we are supported as well by facts as by reasoning. We should be sorry to load our adversaries with unmerited reproach; but to what history, to what record will they appeal for the traits of moral greatness exhibited by their disciples? Where shall we look for the trophies of infidel magnanimity, or atheistical virtue? Not that we mean to accuse them of inactivity: they have recently filled the world with the fame of their exploits; exploits of a different kind indeed, but of imperishable memory, and disastrous lustre.

Though it is confessed great and splendid actions are not the ordinary employment of life, but must, from their nature, be reserved for high and eminent occasions; yet that system is essentially defective, which leaves no room for their cultivation. They are important, both from their immediate advantage and their remoter influence. They often save, and always illustrate, the age and nation in which they appear. They raise the standard of morals; they arrest the progress of degeneracy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life; monuments of the greatness of the human soul, they present to the world the august image of virtue in her sublimest form, from which streams of light and glory issue to remote times and ages; while their commemoration, by the pen of historians and poets, awakens in distant bosoms the sparks of kindred excellence.

Combine the frequent and familiar perpetration of atrocious deeds with the dearth of great and generous actions, and you have the exact picture of that condition of society which completes the degradation of the species; the frightful contrast of dwarfish virtues and gigantic vices, where every thing good is mean and little, and every thing evil is rank and luxuriant; a dead and sickening uniformity prevails, broken only at intervals by volcanic eruptions of anarchy and crime.

II. Hitherto we have considered the influence of scepticism on the principles of virtue; and have endeavored to shew that it despoils it of its dignity, and lays its authority in the dust. Its influence on the formation of character remains to be examined. The actions of men are oftener determined by their character than their

interest; their conduct takes its color more from their acquired taste, inclinations, and habits, than from a deliberate regard to their greatest good. It is only on great occasions the mind awakes to take an extended survey of her whole course, and that she suffers the dictates of reason to impress a new bias upon her movements. The actions of each day are, for the most part, links which follow each other in the chain of custom. Hence the great effort of practical wisdom is to imbue the mind with right tastes, affections, and habits; the elements of character, and masters of action.

The exclusion of a Supreme Being, and of a superintending providence, tends directly to the destruction of moral taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindle such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder.

When we reflect on the manner in which the idea of Deity is formed, we must be convinced that such an idea intimately present to the mind, must have a most powerful effect in refining the moral taste. Composed of the richest elements, it embraces, in the character of a beneficent Parent and almighty Ruler, whatever is venerable in wisdom, whatever is awful in authority, whatever is touching in goodness.

Human excellence is blended with many imperfections, and seen under many limitations. It is beheld only in detached and separate portions, nor ever appears in any one character whole and entire. So that when, in imitation of the Stoics, we wish to form out of these fragments the notion of a perfectly wise and good man, we know it is a mere fiction of the mind, without any real being in whom it is embodied and realized. In the belief of a Deity, these conceptions are reduced to a reality; the scattered rays of an ideal excellence are concentrated, and become the real attributes of that Being with whom we stand in the nearest relation, who sits supreme at the head of the universe, is armed with infinite power, and pervades all nature with his presence.

The efficacy of the sentiments in producing and augmenting a virtuous taste will indeed be proportioned to the vividness with which they are formed, and the frequency with which they recur; yet some benefit will not fail to result from them even in their lowest degree.

The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property; that, as it admits of no substitute, so, from the first moment it is impressed it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually receiving fresh accessions, is continually growing more extended and refulgent, by having transferred upon it new perceptions of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself, as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order or happiness. It borrows splendor from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe.

As the object of worship will always be, in a degree, the object of imitation, hence arises a fixed standard of moral excellence; by the contemplation of which the tendencies to corruption are counteracted, the contagion of bad example is checked, and human nature rises above its natural level.

When the knowledge of God was lost in the world, just ideas of virtue and moral obligation disappeared along with it. How is it to be otherwise accounted for, that in the polished nations, and in the enlightened times of pagan antiquity, the most unnatural lusts and detestable impurities were not only tolerated in private life,* but entered into religion, and formed a material part of public worship;† while among the Jews, a people so much inferior in every other branch of knowledge, the same vices were regarded with horror?

The reason is this: The true character of God was unknown to the former, which by the light of divine revelation was imparted to the latter. The former cast their deities in the mould of their own imaginations, in consequence of which they partook of the vices and defects of their worshippers. To the latter, no scope was left for the wanderings of fancy; but a pure and perfect model was prescribed.

False and corrupt, however, as was the religion of the pagans;

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* It is worthy of observation, that the elegant and philanthropic *Xenophon*, in delineating the model of a perfect prince in the character of Cyrus, introduces a Mede who had formed an unnatural passion for his hero; and relates the incident in a lively, festive humor, without being in the least conscious of any indelicacy attached to it.—What must be the state of manners in a country where a circumstance of this kind, feigned, no doubt, by way of ornament, finds a place in such a work! *Cyri Instit. Lib.* 1.

Deinde nobis qui *concedentibus philosophis antiquis*, adolescentulis delectamur etiam vitia sæpe jucunda sunt. *Cicero de Nat. Dei. Lib.* 1.

† ——— *Nam quo non prostat fœmina templo.* JUV.

The impurities practised in the worship of Isis, an Egyptian deity, rose to such a height in the reign of *Tiberius*, that that profligate prince thought fit to prohibit her worship, and at the same time inflicted on her priests the punishment of crucifixion. *Joseph. Antiquit. Judaic. L.* 18.

(if it deserve the name) and defective, and often vicious, as was the character of their imaginary deities, it was still better for the world for the void of knowledge to be filled with these, than abandoned to a total scepticism; for if both systems are equally false, they are not equally pernicious. When the fictions of heathenism consecrated the memory of its legislators and heroes, it invested them for the most part with those qualities which were in the greatest repute. They were supposed to possess in the highest degree the virtues in which it was most honorable to excel; and to be the witnesses, approvers and patrons of those perfections in others, by which their own character was chiefly distinguished. Men saw, or rather fancied they saw, in these supposed deities, the qualities they most admired, dilated to a larger size, moving in a higher sphere, and associated with the power, dignity, and happiness of superior natures. With such ideal models before them, and conceiving themselves continually acting under the eye of such spectators and judges, they felt a real elevation; their eloquence became more impassioned, their patriotism inflamed, and their courage exalted.

Revelation, by displaying the true character of God, affords a pure and perfect standard of virtue; heathenism, one in many respects defective and vicious; the fashionable scepticism of the present day, which excludes the belief of all superior powers, affords no standard at all. Human nature knows nothing better or higher than itself. All above and around it being shrouded in darkness, and the prospect confined to the tame realities of life, virtue has no room upwards to expand; nor are any excursions permitted into that unseen world, the true element of the great and good, by which it is fortified with motives equally calculated to satisfy the reason, to delight the fancy, and to impress the heart.

III. Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste; it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society, are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality; and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish.

That the love, fear, and habitual contemplation of a Being infinitely exalted, or in other words, devotion, is adapted to promote a sober and moderate estimate of our own excellencies, is incontestible; nor is it less evident that the exclusion of such sentiments must be favorable to pride. The criminality of pride will, perhaps, be less readily admitted; for though there is no vice so opposite to the spirit of Christianity, yet there is none which, even

in the Christian world, has, under various pretences, been treated with so much indulgence.

There is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, and which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others. Very different is that restless desire of distinction, that passion for theatrical display, which inflames the heart and occupies the whole attention of vain men. This, of all the passions, is the most unsocial, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivisions than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led by an attention to their own interest to promote the welfare of each other; their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union and conjunction of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures to devote to the admiration of each other is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impaired the common stock. The success of one is the disappointment of multitudes. For though there be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man, every man in whom vanity is the ruling passion, regarding his rival as his enemy, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and repine at his success.

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed (and it is often disappointed) it is exasperated into malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man commences a determined misanthropist. He detests that excellence which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world; the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtue, talents, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness, and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity; a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such a profound indifference to the welfare of others, that whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues

may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man is his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow creatures, as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize ; he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence, or his steps are dyed in blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

His apparent good qualities lose all their worth, by losing all that is simple, genuine, and natural: they are even pressed into the service of vanity, and become the means of enlarging its power. The truly good man is jealous over himself, lest the notoriety of his best actions by blending itself with their motive, should diminish their value ; the vain man performs the same actions for the sake of that notoriety. The good man quietly discharges his duty, and shuns ostentation ; the vain man considers every good deed lost that is not publicly displayed. The one is intent upon realities, the other upon semblances ; the one aims to *be* virtuous, the other to *appear* so.

Nor is a mind inflated with vanity more disqualified for right action than just speculation, or better disposed to the pursuit of truth than the practice of virtue. To such a mind the simplicity of truth is disgusting. Careless of the improvement of mankind, and intent only upon astonishing with the appearance of novelty, the glare of paradox will be preferred to the light of truth ; opinions will be embraced, not because they are just, but because they are new ; the more flagitious, the more subversive of morals, the more alarming to the wise and good, the more welcome to men who estimate their literary powers by the mischief they produce, and who consider the anxiety and terror they impress as the measure of their renown. Truth is simple and uniform, while error may be infinitely varied ; and as it is one thing to start paradoxes, and another to make discoveries, we need the less wonder at the prodigious increase of modern philosophers.

We have been so much accustomed to consider extravagant self estimation merely as a *ridiculous* quality, that many will be surprised to find it treated as a vice pregnant with serious mischief to society. But, to form a judgement on its influence on the manners and happiness of a nation, it is necessary only to look at its effects in a family ; for bodies of men are only collections of individuals, and the greatest nation is nothing more than an aggregate of a number of families. Conceive of a domestic circle, in which each member is elated with the most extravagant opinion of

himself, and a proportionable contempt of every other; is full of little contrivances to catch applause, and whenever he is not praised is sullen and disappointed. What a picture of disunion, disgust, and animosity would such a family present! How utterly would domestic affection be extinguished, and all the purposes of domestic society be defeated! The general prevalence of such dispositions must be accompanied by an equal proportion of general misery. The tendency of pride to produce strife and hatred is sufficiently apparent from the pains men have been at to construct a system of politeness which is nothing more than a sort of mimic humility, in which the sentiments of an offensive self-estimation are so far disguised and suppressed as to make them compatible with the spirit of society; such a mode of behaviour as would naturally result from an attention to the apostolic injunction; *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.* But if the semblance be of such importance, how much more useful the reality! If the mere garb of humility be of such indispensable necessity that without it society could not subsist, how much better still would the harmony of the world be preserved, were the condescension, deference, and respect, so studiously displayed, a true picture of the heart!

The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom; infusing into those entrusted with the enaction of laws a spirit of rash innovation and daring empiricism, a disdain of the established usages of mankind, a foolish desire to dazzle the world with new and untried systems of policy, in which the precedents of antiquity and the experience of ages are only consulted to be trodden under foot; and into the executive department of government, a fierce contention for preeminence, an incessant struggle to supplant and destroy, with a propensity to calumny and suspicion, proscription and massacre.

We shall suffer the most eventful season ever witnessed in the affairs of men to pass over our heads to very little purpose, if we fail to learn from it some awful lessons on the nature and progress of the passions. The true light in which the French revolution ought to be contemplated is that of a grand experiment on human nature. Among the various passions which that revolution has so strikingly displayed, none is more conspicuous than vanity; nor is it less difficult, without adverting to the national character of the people, to account for its extraordinary predominance. Political power, the most seducing object of ambition, never before circulated through so many hands; the prospect of possessing it was never before presented to so many minds. Multitudes who, by

their birth and education, and not unfrequently by their talents, seemed destined to perpetual obscurity, were by the alternate rise and fall of parties, elevated into distinction, and shared in the functions of government. The short-lived forms of power and office glided with such rapidity through successive ranks of degradation, from the court to the very dregs of the populace, that they seemed rather to solicit acceptance than to be a prize contended for.* Yet, as it was impossible for all to possess authority, though none were willing to obey, a general impatience to break the ranks and rush into the foremost ground, maddened and infuriated the nation, and overwhelmed law, order, and civilization, with the violence of a torrent.

If such be the mischiefs both in public and private life resulting from an excessive self-estimation, it remains next to be considered whether Providence has supplied any medicine to correct it; for as the reflection on excellencies, whether real or imaginary, is always attended with pleasure to the possessor, it is a disease deeply seated in our nature.

Suppose there were a great and glorious Being always present with us, who had given us existence with numberless other blessings, and on whom we depended each instant, as well for every present enjoyment as for every future good; suppose again we had incurred the just displeasure of such a Being by ingratitude and disobedience, yet that in great mercy he had not cast us off, but had assured us he was willing to pardon and restore us on our humble intreaty and sincere repentance; say, would not an habitual sense of the presence of this Being, self-reproach for having displeased him, and an anxiety to recover his favor be the most effectual antidote to pride? But such are the leading discoveries made by the Christian revelation, and such the dispositions which a practical belief of it inspires.

Humility is the first fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Religion, and that alone, teaches *absolute* humility; by which I mean a sense of our *absolute* nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other, is often an unwelcome sentiment forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it; that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most live-

* ————Æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres. Hor.

ly perceptions of the divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the divine favor. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt; and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart.

The wicked (says the Psalmist) *through the pride of their countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all their thoughts.* When we consider the incredible vanity of the atheistical sect, together with the settled malignity and unrelenting rancor with which they pursue every vestige of religion, is it uncandid to suppose that its humbling tendency is one principal cause of their enmity; that they are eager to displace a Deity from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void; to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins; and that as their licentiousness is impatient of restraint, so their pride disdains a superior?

We mentioned a ferocity of character as one effect of sceptical impiety. It is an inconvenience attending a controversy with those with whom we have few principles in common, that we are often in danger of reasoning inconclusively, for the want of its being clearly known and settled what our opponents admit, and what they deny. The persons, for example, with whom we are at present engaged, have discarded humility and modesty from the catalogue of virtues; on which account we have employed the more time in evincing their importance: but whatever may be thought of humility as a *virtue*, it surely will not be denied that inhumanity is a most detestable *vice;* a vice, however, which scepticism has a most powerful tendency to inflame.

As we have already shewn that pride hardens the heart, and that religion is the only effectual antidote, the connexion between irreligion and inhumanity is in this view obvious. But there is another light in which this part of the subject may be viewed, in my humble opinion, much more important, though seldom adverted to. The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably more *consequence* than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by an Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Every thing which relates to him becomes interesting;

and to trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. If such be the destination of man, it is evident that in the qualities which fit him for it his principal dignity consists; his moral greatness is his true greatness. Let the sceptical principles be admitted, which represent him, on the contrary, as the offspring of chance, connected with no superior power, and sinking into annihilation at death, and he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. The characteristic difference is lost betwixt him and the brute creation, from which he is no longer distinguished, except by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions.

If we reflect on that part of our nature which disposes us to humanity, we shall find that, where we have no particular attachment, our sympathy with the sufferings, and concern for the destruction of sensitive beings, is in proportion to their supposed importance in the general scale; or, in other words, to their supposed capacity of enjoyment. We feel, for example, much more at witnessing the destruction of a man than of an inferior animal, because we consider it as involving the extinction of a much greater sum of happiness. For the same reason, he who would shudder at the slaughter of a large animal, will see a thousand insects perish without a pang. Our sympathy with the calamities of our fellow-creatures is adjusted to the same proportions; for we feel more powerfully affected with the distresses of fallen greatness, than with equal or greater distresses sustained by persons of inferior rank; because, having been accustomed to associate with an elevated station, the idea of superior happiness, the loss appears the greater, and the wreck more extensive. But the disproportion in importance betwixt man and the meanest insect, is not so great as that which subsists betwixt man considered as *mortal* and as *immortal;* that is, betwixt man as he is represented by the system of scepticism, and that of divine revelation; for the enjoyment of the meanest insect bears some proportion, though a very small one, to the present happiness of man; but the happiness of time bears none at all to that of eternity. The sceptical system, therefore, sinks the importance of human existence to an inconceivable degree.

From these principles results the following important inference —that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence, must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a sceptic from what it is in those of a Christian. With the sceptic it is nothing more than diverting the course of a little red fluid, called blood; it is merely lessening the number by one of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The Christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that

irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him forever in an unalterable condition of felicity or woe. The former perceives in death nothing but its physical circumstances; the latter is impressed with the magnitude of its moral consequences. It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to a superior power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions and actions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny, more than any superiority of intellectual powers abstracted from these considerations, which invest him with such mysterious grandeur, and constitute the firmest guard on the sanctuary of human life. This reasoning, it is true, serves more *immediately* to shew how the disbelief of a future state endangers the security of life; but though this be its *direct* consequence, it extends by analogy much farther, since he who has learned to sport with the *lives* of his fellow-creatures will feel but little solicitude for their welfare in any other instance; but, as the greater includes the less, will easily pass from this to all the inferior gradations of barbarity.

As the advantage of the armed over the unarmed is not seen till the moment of attack, so in that tranquil state of society, in which law and order maintain their ascendency, it is not perceived, perhaps not even suspected, to what an alarming degree the principles of modern infidelity leave us naked and defenceless. But let the state be convulsed, let the mounds of regular authority be once overflowed, and the still small voice of law drowned in the tempest of popular fury, (events which recent experience shews to be possible) it will then be seen that atheism is a school of ferocity; and that having taught its disciples to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, they will be prepared in the fierce conflicts of party to trample upon them without pity, and extinguish them without remorse.

It was late* before the atheism of Epicurus gained footing at Rome; but its prevalence was soon followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation and blood, as were *then* unparalleled in the history of the world; from which the republic being never able to recover itself, after many unsuccessful struggles, exchanged liberty for repose, by submission to absolute power. Such were the effects of atheism at Rome. An attempt has been recently made to establish a similar system in France, the consequences of which are too well known to render it requisite for me to shock your feelings by a recital. The only doubt that can arise is, whether the barbarities which have sustained the revolution in that unhappy country are justly chargeable on the preva-

* Neque enim assentior iis qui *hæc nuper* disserare cœperunt cum corporibus simul animos interire atque omnia morte deleri. *Cicero de Amicitia.*

lence of atheism. Let those who doubt of this, recollect that the men who, by their activity and talents prepared the minds of the people for that great change—*Voltaire*, *D'Alembert*, *Diderot*, *Rousseau*, and others, were avowed enemies of Revelation; and in all their writings the diffusion of scepticism and revolutionary principles went hand in hand; that the fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the Christian priesthood* and religious institutions, without once pretending, like other persecutors, to execute the vengeance of God (whose name they never mentioned) upon his enemies; that their atrocities were committed with a wanton levity and brutal merriment; that the reign of atheism was avowedly and expressly the reign of terror; that in the full madness of their career, in the highest climax of their horrors, they shut up the temples of God, abolished his worship, and proclaimed death to be an eternal sleep; as if, by pointing to the silence of the sepulchre and the sleep of the dead, these ferocious barbarians meant to apologize for leaving neither sleep, quiet, nor repose to the living.

As the heathens fabled that Minerva issued full armed from the head of Jupiter, so no sooner were the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, than they gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins; the seat of voluptuous refinement, of pleasure and of arts, into a theatre of blood.

Having already shewn that the principles of infidelity facilitate the commission of crimes, by removing the restraints of fear; and that they foster the arrogance of the individual, while they inculcate the most despicable opinion of the species; the inevitable result is, that a haughty self-confidence, a contempt of mankind, together with a daring defiance of religious restraints, are the natural ingredients of the atheistical character; nor is it less evident that these are, of all others, the dispositions which most forcibly stimulate to violence and cruelty.

Settle it therefore in your minds, as a maxim never to be effaced or forgotten, that atheism is an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every useful restraint, and to every virtuous affection; that, leaving nothing above us to excite awe, nor around us to awaken tenderness, it wages war with heaven and earth; its first object is to dethrone God, its next to destroy man.†

* See Note at the end of this Sermon, p. 49.

† As human nature is the same in all ages, it is not surprising to find the same moral systems, even in the most dissimilar circumstances, produce corresponding effects. *Josephus* remarks that the Sadducees, a kind of Jewish infidels, whose tenets were the denial of a moral government and a future state, were distinguished from the other sects by their ferocity.—*De Bell. Jud. l.* 2. He elsewhere remarks, that they were eminent for their inhumanity in their judicial capacity.

There is a third vice, not less destructive to society than either of those which have been already mentioned, to which the system of modern infidelity is favorable; that is, unbridled sensuality, the licentious and unrestrained indulgence of those passions which are essential to the continuation of the species. The magnitude of these passions, and their supreme importance to the existence as well as the peace and welfare of society, have rendered it one of the first objects of solicitude with every wise legislator, to restrain them by such laws, and to confine their indulgence within such limits as shall best promote the great ends for which they were implanted.

The benevolence and wisdom of the author of Christianity are eminently conspicuous in the laws he has enacted on this branch of morals; for, while he authorizes marriage, he restrains the vagrancy and caprice of the passions, by forbidding polygamy and divorce; and, well knowing that offences against the laws of chastity usually spring from an ill-regulated imagination, he inculcates purity of heart. Among innumerable benefits which the world has derived from the Christian religion, a superior refinement in the sexual sentiments, a more equal and respectful treatment of women, greater dignity and permanence conferred on the institution of marriage, are not the least considerable; in consequence of which the purest affections, and the most sacred duties, are grafted on the stock of the strongest instincts.

The aim of all the leading champions of infidelity is to rob mankind of these benefits, and throw them back into a state of gross and brutal sensuality. Mr. Hume asserts adultery to be but a slight offence *when known*, *when secret* no crime at all. In the same spirit he represents the private conduct of the profligate Charles, whose debaucheries polluted the age, as the just subject of panegyric. A disciple in the same school has lately had the unblushing effrontery to stigmatize marriage as the worst of all monopolies; and, in a narrative of his licentious amours, to make a formal apology for departing from his principles, by submitting to its restraints. The popular productions on the continent, which issue from the atheistical school, are incessantly directed to the same purpose.

Under every possible aspect in which infidelity can be viewed, it extends the dominion of sensuality; it repeals and abrogates every law by which divine revelation has, under such awful sanctions, restrained the indulgence of the passions. The disbelief of a supreme, omniscient Being, which it inculcates, releases its disciples from an attention to the *heart*, from every care but the preservation of outward decorum; and the exclusion of the devout affections, and an unseen world, leaves the mind immersed in visible, sensible objects.

There are two sorts of pleasures, corporeal and mental. Though we are indebted to the senses for all our perceptions *originally*, yet those which are at the farthest remove from their *immediate impressions* confer the most elevation on the character, since in proportion as they are multiplied and augmented, the slavish subjection to the senses is subdued. Hence the true and only antidote to debasing sensuality is the possession of a fund of that *kind of enjoyment* which is independent of the corporeal appetites. Inferior in the perfection of several of his senses to different parts of the brute creation, the superiority of man over them all consists in his superior power of multiplying by new combinations his mental perceptions, and thereby of creating to himself resources of happiness separate from external sensation. In the scale of enjoyment, the first remove from sense are the pleasures of reason and society; the next are the pleasures of devotion and religion. The former, though totally distinct from those of sense, are yet less perfectly adapted to moderate their excesses than the last, as they are in a great measure conversant with visible and sensible objects. The religious affections and sentiments are in fact, and were intended to be the *proper antagonist* of sensuality; the great deliverer from the thraldom of the appetites, by opening a spiritual world, and inspiring hopes and fears, and consolations and joys which bear no relation to the material and sensible universe. The criminal indulgence of sensual passions admits but of two modes of prevention; the establishment of such laws and maxims in society as shall render lewd profligacy impracticable or infamous, or the infusion of such principles and habits as shall render it distasteful. Human legislatures have encountered the disease in the first; the truths and sanctions of revealed religion in the last of these methods; to both of which the advocates of modern infidelity are equally hostile.

So much has been said by many able writers to evince the inconceivable benefit of the marriage institution, that to hear it seriously attacked by men who style themselves philosophers, at the close of the eighteenth century, must awaken indignation and surprise. The object of this discourse leads us to direct our attention particularly to the influence of this institution on the *civilization* of the world.

From the records of Revelation we learn that marriage, or the *permanent union* of the sexes, was ordained by God, and existed under different modifications in the early infancy of mankind, without which they could never have emerged from barbarism. For, conceive only what eternal discord, jealousy and violence would ensue, were the objects of the tenderest affections secured to their possessor by no law or tie of moral obligation; were domestic en-

joyments disturbed by incessant fear, and licentiousness inflamed by hope. Who could find sufficient tranquillity of mind to enable him to plan or execute any continued scheme of action; or what room for arts or sciences, or religion, or virtue, in that state in which the chief earthly happiness was exposed to every lawless invader; where one was racked with an incessant anxiety to keep what the other was equally eager to acquire? It is not probable in itself, independent of the light of Scripture, that the benevolent author of the human race ever placed them in so wretched a condition at first; it is certain they could not remain in it long without being exterminated. Marriage, by shutting out these evils, and enabling every man to rest secure in his enjoyments, is the great civilizer of the world; with this security the mind is at liberty to expand in generous affections, has leisure to look abroad, and engage in the pursuits of knowledge, science and virtue.

Nor is it in this way only that marriage institutions are essential to the welfare of mankind. They are sources of tenderness, as well as the guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of the sexes, there can be no permanent families; the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and which, were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved.

Families are so many centres of attraction, which preserve mankind from being scattered and dissipated by the repulsive powers of selfishness. The order of nature is evermore from particulars to generals.—As in the operations of intellect we proceed from the contemplation of individuals to the formation of general abstractions, so in the development of the passions in like manner, we advance from private to public affections; from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind.*

In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender; for benevolent affections are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early impressions of tenderness, gratitude, and sympathy, which the endearments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which, it is the best possible school.

* Arctior vero colligatio societatis propinquorum; ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis, in exiguum angustumque concluditur, nam cum sit hoc natura commune animantium ut habeant libidinem procreandi prima societas in ipso conjugio est, proxima in liberis, deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ.—*Cic. de Off.*

The advocates of infidelity invert this eternal order of nature. Instead of inculcating the private affections, as a discipline by which the mind is prepared for those of a more public nature, they set them in direct opposition to each other, they propose to build general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness, and to make us love the whole species more, by loving every particular part of it less. In pursuit of this chimerical project, gratitude, humility, conjugal, parental, and filial affection, together with every other social disposition, are reprobated; virtue is limited to a passionate attachment to the general good. Is it not natural to ask, when all the tenderness of life is extinguished, and all the bands of society are untwisted, from whence this ardent affection for the general good is to spring?

When this savage philosophy has completed its work, when it has taught its disciple to look with perfect indifference on the offspring of his body and the wife of his bosom, to estrange himself from his friends, insult his benefactors, and silence the pleadings of gratitude and pity; will he, by thus divesting himself of all that is human, be better prepared for the disinterested love of his species? Will he become a philanthropist only because he has ceased to be a man? Rather, in this total exemption from all the feelings which humanize and soften, in this chilling frost of universal indifference, may we not be certain, selfishness, unmingled and uncontrolled, will assume the empire of his heart; and that under pretence of advancing the general good, an object to which the fancy may give innumerable shapes, he will be prepared for the violation of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime? Extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of the private affections; so that to expect to reap the former from the extinction of the latter, is to oppose the means to the end; is as absurd as to attempt to reach the summit of the highest mountain without passing through the intermediate spaces, or to hope to attain the heights of science by forgetting the elements of knowledge. These absurdities have sprung, however, in the advocates of infidelity, from an ignorance of human nature, sufficient to disgrace even those who did not style themselves philosophers. Presuming, contrary to the experience of every moment, that the affections are awakened by *reasoning*, and perceiving that the general good is an incomparably greater object *in itself* than the happiness of any limited number of individuals, they inferred nothing more was necessary than to exhibit it in its just dimensions, to draw the *affections* towards it; as though the fact of the superior populousness of China to Great Britain needed but to be known to render us indifferent to our domestic concerns, and lead us to direct all our anxiety to the prosperity of that vast but remote empire.

It is not the province of reason to awaken new passions, or open new sources of sensibility; but to direct us in the attainment of those objects which nature has already rendered pleasing, or to determine among the interfering inclinations and passions which sway the mind, which are the fittest to be preferred.

Is a regard to the general good then, you will reply, to be excluded from the motives of action? Nothing is more remote from my intention; but as the nature of this motive has, in my opinion, been much misunderstood by some good men, and abused by others of a different description to the worst of purposes, permit me to declare in a few words what appears to me to be the truth on this subject.

The welfare of the whole system of being must be allowed to be, *in itself*, the object of all others the most worthy of being pursued; so that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step, *what action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong, an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws and principles.

But this being impossible, since the good of the *whole* is a motive so loose and indeterminate, and embraces such an infinity of relations, that before we could be certain what action it prescribed, the season of action would be past; to weak, short-sighted mortals, Providence has assigned a sphere of agency less grand and extensive indeed, but better suited to their limited powers, by implanting certain *affections* which it is their duty to cultivate, and suggesting particular rules to which they are bound to conform. By these provisions the boundaries of virtue are easily ascertained, at the same time that its ultimate object, the good of the whole, is secured; for, since the happiness of the entire system results from the happiness of the several parts, the affections, which confine the attention *immediately* to the latter, conspire in the end to the promotion of the former; as the laborer, whose industry is limited to a corner of a large building, performs his part towards rearing the structure much more effectually than if he extended his care to the whole.

As the interest, however, of any limited number of persons may not only not contribute, but may possibly be directly opposed to the general good, (the interest of a family, for example, to that of a province, or of a nation to that of the world,) Providence has so ordered it, that in a well regulated mind there springs up, as we have already seen, besides particular attachments, *an extended regard to the species*, whose office is twofold; not to *destroy* and *extinguish* the more private affections, which is mental parricide; but first, as far as is consistent with the claims of those who are

immediately committed to our care, *to do good to all men;* secondly, to exercise a jurisdiction and control over the private affections, so as to prohibit their indulgence, whenever it would be attended with *manifest detriment* to the whole. Thus every part of our nature is brought into action; all the practical principles of the human heart find an element to move in, each in its different fort and manner conspiring, without mutual collision, to maintain the harmony of the world and the happiness of the universe.*

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* It is somewhat singular, that many of the fashionable infidels have hit upon a definition of virtue which perfectly coincides with that of certain metaphysical divines in America, first invented and defended by that most acute reasoner, JONATHAN EDWARDS. They both place virtue exclusively in a passion for the general good; or, as Mr. EDWARDS expresses it, *love to being in general:* so that our love is always to be proportioned to the magnitude of its object in the scale of being, which is liable to the objections I have already stated, as well as to many others which the limits of this note will not permit me to enumerate. Let it suffice to remark, (1,) that virtue on these principles is an utter impossibility; for the system of being, comprehending the Great Supreme, is *infinite;* and therefore, to maintain the proper proportion, the force of particular attachment must be infinitely less than the passion for the general good; but the limits of the human mind are not capable of any emotions so infinitely different *in degree*. (2.) Since *our views* of the extent of the universe are capable of perpetual enlargement, admitting the sum of existence is ever the same, we must return back at each step to diminish the strength of particular affections, or they will become disproportionate; and consequently, on these principles, vicious; so that the balance must be continually fluctuating, by the weights being taken out of one scale and put into the other. (3.) If virtue consist *exclusively* in love to being in general, or attachment to the general good, the particular affections are, to every purpose of virtue, useless, and even pernicious; for their immediate, nay, their necessary tendency, is to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale. To allege that the *general good* is promoted by them, will be of no advantage to the defence of this system, but, the contrary, by confessing that a greater sum of happiness is attained by a deviation from, than an adherence to its principles; unless its advocates mean by the love of being in general, the same as the private affections, which is to confound all the distinctions of language, as well as all the operations of mind. Let it be remembered, we have no dispute respecting what is the ultimate end of virtue, which is allowed on both sides to be the greatest sum of happiness in the universe. The question is merely what is *virtue itself?* or, in other words, what are the means appointed for the attainment of that end?

There is little doubt, from some parts of Mr. GODWIN'S work, entitled, "*Political Justice,*" as well as from his early habits of reading, that he was indebted to Mr. EDWARDS for his principal arguments against the private affections; though, with a daring consistence, he has pursued his principles to an extreme, from which that most excellent man would have revolted with horror. The fundamental error of the whole system arose, as I conceive, from a mistaken pursuit of simplicity; from a wish to construct a moral system, without leaving sufficient scope for the infinite variety of moral phenomena and mental combination; in consequence of which, its advocates were obliged to place virtue *exclusively* in some *one disposition* of mind; and, since the passion for the general good is undeniably the *noblest* and most extensive of all others, when it was once resolved to place virtue in any *one thing*, there remained little room to hesitate which should be preferred. It might have been worth while to reflect, that in the natural world there are two kinds of attraction: one, which holds the several *parts* of individual bodies in contact; another,

Before I close this discourse, I cannot omit to mention three circumstances attending the propagation of infidelity by its present abettors, equally new and alarming.

1. It is the first attempt which has been ever witnessed on an extensive scale to establish *the principles of atheism;* the first effort which history has recorded to disannul and extinguish the belief of all superior powers; the consequence of which, should it succeed, would be to place mankind in a situation never before experienced, not even during the ages of pagan darkness. The system of polytheism was as remote from modern infidelity as from true religion. Amidst that rubbish of superstition, the product of fear, ignorance, and vice, which had been accumulating for ages, some faint embers of sacred truth remained unextinguished; the interposition of unseen powers in the affairs of men was believed and revered, the sanctity of oaths was maintained, the idea of *revelation* and *tradition*, as a source of religious knowledge, was familiar; a useful persuasion of the existence of a future world was kept alive, and the greater gods were looked up to as the guardians of the public welfare, the patrons of those virtues which promote the prosperity of states, and the avengers of injustice, perfidy, and fraud.*

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which maintains the union of bodies themselves with the general system; and that, though the union in the former case is much more *intimate* than in the latter, each is equally essential to the order of the world. Similar to this is the relation which the public and private affections bear to each other, and their use in the moral system.

* The testimony of Polybius to the beneficial effects which resulted from the system of pagan superstition, in fortifying the sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a sceptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion.

"But among all the useful institutions (says Polybius) that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods; and that which other men regard as an object of disgrace, appears, in my judgement, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained. I mean superstition, which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens, and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded.

"The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather *are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity*, in endeavoring to extirpate these opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent be entrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written sureties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand, who in the

Of whatever benefit superstition might formerly be productive, by the scattered particles of truth which it contained, these advantages can now only be reaped from the soil of true religion; nor is there any other alternative left than the belief of Christianity, or absolute atheism. In the revolutions of the human mind, exploded *opinions* are often revived; but an exploded superstition never recovers its credit. The pretension of divine revelation is so august and commanding, that when its falsehood is once discerned, it is covered with all the ignominy of detected imposture; it falls from such a height (to change the figure) that it is inevitably crumbled into atoms. Religions, whether false or true, are not creatures of arbitrary institution. After discrediting the principles of piety, should our modern free-thinkers find it necessary, in order to restrain the excesses of ferocity, to seek for a substitute in some popular superstition, it will prove a vain and impracticable attempt. They may recal the names, restore the altars, and revive the ceremonies; but to rekindle the spirit of heathenism will exceed their power; because it is impossible to enact ignorance by law, or to repeal by legislative authority the dictates of reason, and the right of science.

2. The efforts of infidels to diffuse the principles of infidelity among the common people, is another alarming symptom peculiar to the present time. HUME, BOLINGBROKE, and GIBBON addressed themselves solely to the more polished classes of the community, and would have thought their refined speculations debased by an attempt to enlist disciples from among the populace. Infidelity has lately grown condescending; bred in the speculations

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course of their magistracies and in embassies disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on, by the single obligation of an oath, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty. And, as in other states, a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so among the Romans it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime."—*Hampton's Polybius, vol.* 3, *b.* 6.

Though the system of paganism is justly condemned by reason and Scripture, yet it assumed as true several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage, and the divine approbation of virtue; so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility, which is well stated by the *great and judicious* HOOKER in treating on this subject. "Seeing, therefore, it doth thus appear (says that venerable author) that the safety of all states depended upon religion; that religion, unfeignedly loved, perfecteth men's abilities unto all kinds of virtuous services in the commonwealth; that men's desire is, in general, to hold no religion but the true; and that whatever good effects do grow out of their religion, who embrace, instead of the true, a false, the roots thereof are certain sparks of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error; because no religion can wholly and only consist of untruths, we have reason to think that all true virtues are to honor *true religion* as their parent, and all well ordered commonweals to love her as their chiefest stay."—*Eccles. Pol. b.* 5.

of a daring philosophy, immured at first in the cloisters of the learned, and afterwards nursed in the lap of voluptuousness and of courts; having at length reached its full maturity, it boldly ventures to challenge the suffrages of the people, solicits the acquaintance of peasants and mechanics, and seeks to draw whole nations to its standard.

It is not difficult to account for this new state of things. While infidelity was rare, it was employed as the instrument of literary vanity; its wide diffusion having disqualified it for answering that purpose, it is now adopted as the organ of political convulsion. Literary distinction is conferred by the approbation of a few; but the total subversion and overthrow of society demands the concurrence of millions.

3. The infidels of the present day are the first sophists who have presumed to innovate in the very *substance* of morals. The disputes on moral questions hitherto agitated amongst philosophers, have respected the *grounds* of duty, not the *nature of duty itself;* or they have been merely metaphysical, and related to the *history* of moral sentiments in the mind, the sources and principles from which they were most easily deduced; they never turned on the quality of those dispositions and actions which were to be denominated virtuous. In the firm persuasion that the love and fear of the Supreme Being, the sacred observation of promises and oaths, reverence to magistrates, obedience to parents, gratitude to benefactors, conjugal fidelity, and parental tenderness, were primary virtues, and the chief support of every commonwealth, they were unanimous. The curse denounced upon such as remove ancient land-marks, upon those who call good evil and evil good, put light for darkness and darkness for light, who employ their faculties to subvert the eternal distinctions of right and wrong, and thus to poison the streams of virtue at their source, falls with accumulated weight on the advocates of modern infidelity, and on them alone.

Permit me to close this discourse with a few serious reflections. There is much, it must be confessed, in the apostacy of multitudes, and the rapid progress of infidelity, to awaken our fears for the virtue of the rising generation; but nothing to shake our faith; nothing which Scripture itself does not give us reason to expect. The features which compose the character of apostates, their profaneness, presumption, lewdness, impatience of subordination, restless appetite for change, vain pretensions to freedom and to emancipate the world, while themselves are the slaves of lust, the weapons with which they attack Christianity, and the snares they spread for the unwary, are depicted in the clearest colors by the pencil of prophecy. *Knowing this first* (says Peter) *that there*

shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. 2 Pet. 3: 3. In the same epistle he more fully describes the persons he alludes to; *as chiefly them which walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; sporting themselves in their own deceivings, having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; for when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error; while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.* 2 Pet. 2. Of the same characters Jude admonishes us *to remember that they were foretold as mockers, who should be in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they* (he adds) *who separate themselves,* (by apostacy) *sensual, not having the Spirit.* Infidelity is an evil of short duration. "*It has* (as a judicious writer observes) *no individual subsistence given it in the system of prophecy. It is not a* BEAST; *but a mere putrid excrescence of the papal beast; an excrescence, which, though it may diffuse death through every vein of the body on which it grew, yet shall die along with it.*"* Its enormities will hasten its overthrow. It is impossible that a system which, by villifying every virtue, and embracing the patronage of almost every vice and crime, wages war with all the order and civilization of the world; which, equal to the establishment of nothing, is armed only with the energies of destruction, can long retain an ascendency. It is in no shape formed for perpetuity. Sudden in its rise, and impetuous in its progress, it resembles a mountain torrent, which is loud, filthy, and desolating; but, being fed by no perennial spring, is soon drained off, and disappears. By permitting to a certain extent the prevalence of infidelity, Providence is preparing new triumphs for religion. In asserting its authority, the preachers of the gospel have hitherto found it necessary to weigh the prospects of immortality against the interests of time; to strip the world of its charms, to insist on the deceitfulness of pleasure, the unsatisfying nature of riches, the emptiness of grandeur, and the nothingness of a mere worldly life. Topics of this nature will always have their use; but it is not by such representations alone that the importance of religion is evinced. The prevalence of impiety has armed us with new weapons in its defence.

Religion being primarily intended to make men *wise unto salvation*, the support it ministers to social order, the stability it confers

* See an excellent work, by the Rev. A. FULLER, entitled, "The Gospel its own Witness."

on government and laws, is a *subordinate species* of advantage, which we should have continued to enjoy without reflecting on its cause, but for the developement of deistical principles, and the experiment which has been made of their effects in a neighboring country. It had been the constant boast of infidels, that their system, more liberal and generous than Christianity, needed but to be tried to produce an immense accession to human happiness; and Christian nations, careless and supine, retaining little of religion but the profession, and disgusted with its restraints, lent a favorable ear to these pretensions. God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, Revelation underwent a total eclipse,* while atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sect, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre; that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honors, and to princes the stability of their thrones.

We might ask the patrons of infidelity, what fury impels them to attempt the subversion of Christianity? Is it that they have discovered a better system? To what virtues are their principles favorable? Or is there one which Christians have not carried to a higher perfection than any of which their party can boast? Have they discovered a more excellent rule of life, or a better hope in death than that which the Scriptures suggest? Above all, what are the pretensions on which they rest their claims to be the guides of mankind; or which emboldened them to expect we should trample on the experience of ages, and abandon a religion which has been attested by a train of miracles and prophecies, in which millions of our forefathers have found a refuge in every trouble, and consolation in the hour of death; a religion which has been adorned with the highest sanctity of character and splendor of talents; which enrols amongst its disciples the names of Bacon, Newton, and Locke, the glory of their species, and to

* It is worthy of attention that Mercier, a warm advocate of the French revolution, and a professed deist, in his recent work, entitled "New Paris," acknowledges and laments the extinction of religion in France. "*We have* (says he) *in proscribing superstition, destroyed all religious sentiment; but this is not the way to regenerate the world.*" See Appendix to the 30th vol. Monthly Review.

which these illustrious men were proud to dedicate the last and best fruits of their immortal genius.

If the question at issue is to be decided by argument, nothing can be added to the triumph of Christianity; if by an appeal to authority, what have our adversaries to oppose to these great names. Where are the infidels of such pure, uncontaminated morals, unshaken probity, and extended benevolence, that we should be in danger of being seduced into impiety by their example? Into what obscure recesses of misery, into what dungeons have their philanthropists penetrated, to lighten the fetters and relieve the sorrows of the helpless captive? What barbarous tribes have their apostles visited? What distant climes have *they* explored, encompassed with cold, nakedness, and want, to diffuse principles of virtue, and the blessings of civilization? Or will they rather choose to waive their pretensions to this extraordinary, and, in their eyes, eccentric species of benevolence, (for infidels, we know, are sworn enemies to enthusiasm of every sort) and rest their character on their political exploits; on their efforts to reanimate the virtue of a sinking state, to restrain licentiousness, to calm the tumult of popular fury; and by inculcating the spirit of justice, moderation, and pity for fallen greatness, to mitigate the inevitable horrors of revolution? Our adversaries will at least have the discretion, if not the modesty, to recede from this test.

More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not pierce! Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of their being no witness to their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!

Having been led, by the nature of the subject, to consider chiefly the manner in which sceptical impiety affects the welfare of states, it is the more requisite to warn you against that most fatal mistake of regarding religion as an engine of policy; and to recal to your recollection, that the concern we have in it is much more as *individuals* than as *collective bodies*, and far less temporal than eternal. The happiness which it confers in the present life are blessings which it scatters by the way in its march to immortality. That future condition of being which it ascertains, and for which

its promises and truths are meant to prepare us, is the ultimate end of human societies, the final scope and object of present existence; in comparison of which all the revolutions of nations, and all the vicissitudes of time are light and transitory. *Godliness has*, it is true, *the promise of the life that now is;* but chiefly *of that which is to come.* Other acquisitions may be requisite to make men great; but be assured the religion of Jesus is alone sufficient to make them good and happy. Powerful sources of consolation in sorrow, unshaken fortitude amidst the changes and perturbations of the world, humility remote from meanness, and dignity unstained by pride, contentment in every station, passions pure and calm, with habitual serenity, the full enjoyment of life, undisturbed by the dread of dissolution or the fear of an hereafter, are its invaluable gifts. To these enjoyments, however, you will necessarily continue strangers, unless you resign yourselves wholly to its power; for the consolations of religion are reserved to reward, to sweeten, and to stimulate obedience. Many, without renouncing the profession of Christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that conscious they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without terror. It haunts their imagination, instead of tranquillizing their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their trouble, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended betwixt opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds; and neither enjoy the pleasures of sin, nor the peace of piety. Is it surprising to find a mind thus bewildered in uncertainty, and dissatisfied with itself, court deception, and embrace with eagerness every pretext to mutilate the claims and enervate the authority of Christianity; forgetting that it is of the very essence of the religious principle to preside and control, and that it is impossible to *serve God and Mammon?* It is this class of professors who are chiefly in danger of being entangled in the snares of infidelity.

The champions of infidelity have much more reason to be ashamed than to boast of such converts. For what can be a stronger presumption of the falsehood of a system, than that it is the opiate of a restless conscience; that it prevails with minds of a certain description, not because they find it true, but because they feel it necessary; and that in adopting it, they consult less with their reason than with their vices and their fears? It re-

quires but little sagacity to foresee that speculations which originate in guilt must end in ruin. Infidels are not themselves satisfied with the truth of their system; for had they any settled assurance of its principles, in consequence of calm, dispassionate investigation, they would never disturb the quiet of the world by their attempts to proselyte; but would lament their own infelicity, in not being able to perceive sufficient evidence for the truth of religion, which furnishes such incentives to virtue, and inspires such exalted hopes. Having nothing to substitute in the place of religion, it is absurd to suppose that, in opposition to the collective voice of every country, age and time, proclaiming its necessity, solicitude for the welfare of mankind impels them to destroy it.

To very different motives must their conduct be imputed. More like conspirators than philosophers, in spite of the darkness with which they endeavor to surround themselves, some rays of unwelcome conviction will penetrate, some secret apprehensions that all is not right will make themselves felt, which they find nothing so effectual to quell as an attempt to enlist fresh disciples, who in exchange for new principles, impart confidence, and diminish fear. For the same reason it is seldom they attack Christianity by argument; their favorite weapons are ridicule, obscenity and blasphemy; as the most miserable outcasts of society are, of all men, found most to delight in vulgar merriment and senseless riot.

Jesus Christ seems to have *his fan in his hand, and to be thoroughly purging his floor;* and nominal Christians will probably be scattered like chaff. But has *real* Christianity any thing to fear? Have not the degenerate manners and corrupt lives of multitudes in the visible church been, on the contrary, the principal occasion of scandal and offence? Infidelity, without intending it, is gradually removing this reproach; possessing the property of attracting to itself the morbid humors which pervade the church, until the Christian profession on the one hand is reduced to a sound and healthy state, and scepticism on the other exhibits nothing but a mass of putridity and disease.

In view of the final issue of the contest, we should find little cause to lament the astonishing prevalence of infidelity, but for a solicitude for the rising generation, to whom its principles are recommended by two motives, with young minds the most persuasive; the love of independence, and the love of pleasure. With respect to the first, we would earnestly entreat the young to remember that by the unanimous consent of all ages, modesty, docility, and reverence to superior years, and to parents above all, have been considered as their *appropriate virtues*, a guard assigned by the immutable laws of God and nature on the inexperience

of youth; and, with respect to the second, that Christianity prohibits no pleasures that are innocent, lays no restraints that are capricious; but that the sobriety and purity which it enjoins, by strengthening the intellectual powers, and preserving the faculties of mind and body in undiminished vigor, lay *the surest* foundation of present peace and future eminence. At such a season as this it becomes an urgent duty on parents, guardians, and tutors, to watch, not only over the morals, but the principles of those committed to their care; to make it appear that a concern for their eternal welfare is their chief concern; and to embue them early with that knowledge of the evidences of Christianity, and that profound reverence for the Scriptures that, with the blessing of God, (which with submission they may then expect) *may keep them from this hour of temptation, that has come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth.*

To an attentive observer of the signs of the times it will appear one of the most extraordinary phenomena of this eventful crisis, that, amidst the ravages of atheism and infidelity, real religion is evidently on the increase. *The kingdom of God*, we know, *cometh not with observation*; but still there are not wanting manifest tokens of its approach. The personal appearance of the Son of God was announced by the shaking of nations; his spiritual kingdom, in all probability, will be established in the midst of similar convulsions and disorders. The blasphemous impiety of the enemies of God, as well as the zealous efforts of his sincere worshippers, will doubtless be overruled to accomplish the purposes of his unerring providence; while, in inflicting the chastisements of offended Deity on corrupt communities and nations, infidelity marks its progress by devastation and ruin, by the prostration of thrones and concussion of kingdoms; thus appalling the inhabitants of the world, and compelling them to take refuge in the church of God, the true sanctuary; the stream of divine knowledge, unobserved, is flowing in new channels, winding its course among humble vallies, refreshing thirsty deserts, and enriching with far other and higher blessings than those of commerce, the most distant climes and nations, until agreeably to the prediction of prophecy, the *knowledge of the Lord shall fill and cover the whole earth.*

Within the limits of this discourse it will be impracticable to exhibit the evidences of Christianity; nor is it my design; but there is one consideration, resulting immediately from my text, which is entitled to great weight with all who believe in the one living and true God as the sole object of worship. The Ephesians, in common with other Gentiles, are described in the text as being, previous to their conversion, *without God in the world;* that is, with-

out any just and solid acquaintance with his character, destitute of the knowledge of his will, the institutes of his worship, and the hopes of his favor; to the truth of which representation whoever possesses the slightest acquaintance with pagan antiquity must assent. Nor is it a fact less incontestible, that, while human philosophy was never able to abolish idolatry in a single village, the promulgation of the gospel overthrew it in a great part (and that the most enlightened) of the world. If the unity and perfections of God, together with his moral government, and exclusive right to the worship of mankind, are truths, they cannot reasonably be denied to be truths of the first importance, and infinitely to outweigh the greatest discoveries in science, because they turn the hopes, fears, and interests of man into a totally different channel from that in which they must otherwise flow. Wherever these principles are first admitted, there a new dominion is erected, and a new system of laws established.

But since all events are under divine direction, is it reasonable to suppose that the great Parent, after suffering his creatures to continue for ages ignorant of his true character, should at length, in the course of his providence, fix upon falsehood, and that alone, as the effectual method of making himself known; and that what the virtuous exercise of reason in the best and wisest men was never permitted to accomplish, he should confer on fraud and delusion the honor of effecting? It ill comports with the majesty of truth, or the character of God, to believe he has built the noblest superstructure on the weakest foundation; or reduced mankind to the miserable alternative either of remaining destitute of the knowledge of himself, or of deriving it from the polluted source of impious imposture. We therefore feel ourselves justified on this occasion in adopting the triumphant boast of the great apostle: *Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

NOTE TO PAGE 33.

The fury of the most sanguinary parties was especially pointed against the Christian priesthood, &c.—The author finds he has given great offence to some friends whom he highly esteems, by applying the term *Christian priesthood* to the popish clergy. He begs leave to make a remark or two by way of apology.

1. It is admitted by all candid Protestants that salvation is attainable in the Roman Catholic Church; but he should be glad to be informed what part of the Christian covenant entitles us to expect the salvation of those (where the gospel is promulgated) who are not even a branch of the visible church of Christ. The papistical tenets are either *fundamentally* erroneous, on which supposition it is certain no papist can be saved; or their errors must be consistent with Christian faith, and consequently cannot be a valid reason for excluding those who maintain them from being a part (a most corrupt part, if you please, but still a part) of the Christian church.

2. The popish clergy were persecuted under the *character of Christians*, not under the notion of heretics or scismatics. They who were the subjects of persecution were certainly the best judges of its aim and direction; and when the archbishop of Paris and others endeavored to screen themselves from its effects by a recantation, what did they recant? Was it Popery? No: but the profession of Christianity. These apostates, doubtless, meant to remove the ground of offence, which, in their opinion, was the Christian profession. If the soundest ecclesiastical historians have not refused the honors of martyrdom to such as suffered in the cause of truth amongst the Gnostics, it ill becomes the liberality of the present age to contemplate, with sullen indifference, or malicious joy, the sufferings of conscientious Catholics.

3. At the period to which the author refers, Christian worship of *every kind* was prohibited; while in solemn mockery of religion, adoration was paid to a strumpet under the title of the goddess of reason. Is it necessary to prove that men who were thus abandoned, must be hostile to true religion under every form? Or, if there be any gradations in their abhorrence, to that most which is the most pure and perfect? Are atheism and obscenity more congenial to the protestant than to the popish profession? To have incurred the hatred of the ruling party of France at the season alluded to, is an honor which the author would be sorry to resign, as the exclusive boast of the church of Rome. To have been the object of the partiality of such bloody and inhuman monsters, would have been a stain upon Protestants which the virtue of ages could not obliterate.

REFLECTIONS ON WAR.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE BAPTIST MEETING, CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND,

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 1802.

BEING THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING

FOR

A GENERAL PEACE.

PREFACE.

The writer is not aware that the sentiments contained in this Discourse require apology, though he is convinced he needs the candor of the public with respect to the imperfect manner in which they are exhibited. If it be deemed an impropriety to introduce political reflections in a discourse from the pulpit, he wishes it to be remembered that these are of a general nature, and such as, rising out of the subject and the occasion, he cannot suppose it improper for a Christian minister to impress. With party politics he is determined to have as little to do as possible, and, in the exercise of his professional duties, nothing at all.—Conscious that what is here advanced was meant neither to flatter nor offend any party, he is not very solicitous about those misconstructions or misrepresentations to which the purest intentions are exposed. It will probably be objected, that he has dwelt too much on the horrors of war for a Thanksgiving Sermon; in answer to which he begs it may be remembered, that as the pleasure of rest is relative to fatigue, and that of ease to pain, so the blessing of peace, considered *merely as peace*, is exactly proportioned to the calamity of war. As this, whenever it is justifiable, arises out of a *necessity*, not a desire of acquisition, its natural and proper effect is merely to replace a nation in the state it was in before that necessity was incurred, or, in other words, to recover what was lost, and secure what was endangered. The writer intended to add something more on the moral effects of war, (a subject which he should be glad too see undertaken by some superior hand) but found it would not be compatible with the limits he determined

to assign himself. The Sermon having been preached for the benefit of a Benevolent Society instituted at Cambridge, will sufficiently account for the observations on charity to the poor, introduced towards the close. The good which has already arisen from the exertions of that Society is more than equal to its most sanguine expectations; and should this publication contribute in the smallest degree to the formation of similar ones in other parts, the author will think himself abundantly compensated for the little trouble it has cost him.

CAMBRIDGE, *June* 19, 1802.

A

SERMON.

PSALM 46: VERSES 8, 9.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

To the merciful interposition of Providence we owe it that our native land has been exempted for nearly sixty years from being the seat of war; our insular situation having preserved us, under God, from foreign invasion; the admirable balance of our constitution from internal discord. We have heard indeed, of the ravages of armies, and the depopulation of countries, but they have merely supplied a topic of discourse, and have occasioned no serious alarm. The military system, as far as it has appeared in England, has been seen only on the side of its gaiety and pomp, a pleasing show, without imparting any idea of its horrors; and the rumor of battles and slaughter, conveyed from afar, has rather amused our leisure, than disturbed our repose. While we cannot be too thankful for our security, it has placed us under a disadvantage in one respect; which is, that we have learned to contemplate war with too much indifference, and to feel for the unhappy countries immediately involved in it too little compassion. Had we ever experienced its calamities, we should celebrate the restoration of peace on this occasion with warmer emotions than there is room to apprehend are at present felt. To awaken those sentiments of gratitude which we are this day assembled to express, it will be proper briefly to recall to your attention some of the dreadful effects of hostility. Real war, my brethren, is a very

different thing from that painted image of it, which you see on a parade, or at a review: it is the most awful scourge that Providence employs for the chastisement of man. It is the garment of vengeance with which the Deity arrays himself, when he comes forth to punish the inhabitants of the earth. It is *the day of the Lord, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger.* It is thus described by the sublimest of prophets: *Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty; therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt; pangs and sorrows shall take hold on them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light.*

War may be considered in two views, as it affects the happiness, and as it affects the virtue of mankind; as a source of misery, and as a source of crimes.

1. *Though we must all die*, as the woman of Tekoa said, *and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up;* yet it is impossible for a humane mind to contemplate the rapid extinction of innumerable lives without concern. To perish in a moment, to be hurried instantaneously, without preparation and without warning, into the presence of the Supreme Judge, has something in it inexpressibly awful and affecting. Since the commencement of those hostilities which are now so happily closed, it may be reasonably conjectured that not less than half a million of our fellow-creatures have fallen a sacrifice. Half a million of beings, sharers of the same nature, warmed with the same hopes, and as fondly attached to life as ourselves, have been prematurely swept into the grave; each of whose deaths has pierced the heart of a wife, a parent, a brother, or a sister. How many of these scenes of complicated distress have occurred since the commencement of hostilities, is known only to Omniscience; that they are innumerable cannot admit of a doubt. In some parts of Europe, perhaps, there is scarcely a family exempt!

Though the whole race of man is doomed to dissolution, and we are all hastening to our long home; yet at each successive moment, life and death seem to divide betwixt them the dominion of mankind, and life to have the larger share. It is otherwise in war; death reigns there without a rival, and without control. War is the work, the element, or rather the sport and triumph of death, who glories not only in the extent of his conquest, but in

the richness of his spoil. In the other methods of attack, in the other forms which death assumes, the feeble and the aged, who at the best can live but a short time, are usually the victims; here it is the vigorous and the strong. It is remarked by the most ancient of poets, that in peace children bury their parents, in war parents bury their children; nor is the difference small. Children lament their parents, sincerely, indeed, but with that moderate and tranquil sorrow, which it is natural for those to feel who are conscious of retaining many tender ties, many animating prospects. Parents mourn for their children with the bitterness of despair; the aged parent, the widowed mother, loses, when she is deprived of her children, every thing but the capacity of suffering; her heart, withered and desolate, admits no other object, cherishes no other hope. *It is Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not.*

But to confine our attention to the number of the slain, would give us a very inadequate idea of the ravages of the sword. The lot of those who perish instantaneously may be considered, apart from religious prospects, as comparatively happy, since they are exempt from those lingering diseases and slow torments to which others are liable. We cannot see an individual expire, though a stranger or an enemy, without being sensibly moved, and prompted by compassion to lend him every assistance in our power. Every trace of resentment vanishes in a moment; every other emotion gives way to pity and terror. In these last extremities we remember nothing but the respect and tenderness due to our common nature. What a scene then must a field of battle present, where thousands are left without assistance, and without pity, with their wounds exposed to the piercing air, while the blood, freezing as it flows, binds them to the earth, amidst the trampling of horses, and the insults of an enraged foe! If they are spared by the humanity of the enemy, and carried from the field, it is but a prolongation of torment. Conveyed in uneasy vehicles, often to a remote distance, through roads almost impassable, they are lodged in ill-prepared receptacles for the wounded and the sick, where the variety of distress baffles all the efforts of humanity and skill, and renders it impossible to give to each the attention he demands. Far from their native home, no tender assiduities of friendship, no well-known voice, no wife, or mother, or sister, is near to sooth their sorrows, relieve their thirst, or close their eyes in death! Unhappy man! and must you be swept into the grave unnoticed and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your sufferings, or mingled with your dust?

We must remember, however, that as a very small proportion of a military life is spent in actual combat, so it is a very small

part of its miseries which must be ascribed to this source. More are consumed by the rust of inactivity than by the edge of the sword; confined to a scanty or unwholesome diet, exposed in sickly climates, harassed with tiresome marches and perpetual alarms; their life is a continual scene of hardships and dangers. They grow familiar with hunger, cold and watchfulness. Crowded into hospitals and prisons, contagion spreads amongst their ranks, till the ravages of disease exceed those of the enemy.

We have hitherto only adverted to the sufferings of those who are engaged in the profession of arms without taking into our account the situation of the countries which are the scene of hostilities. How dreadful to hold every thing at the mercy of an enemy, and to receive life itself as a boon dependent on the sword. How boundless the fears which such a situation must inspire, where the issues of life and death are determined by no known laws, principles, or customs, and no conjecture can be formed of our destiny, except as far as it is dimly deciphered in characters of blood, in the dictates of revenge, and the caprices of power. Conceive but for a moment the consternation which the approach of an invading army would impress on the peaceful villages in this neighborhood. When you have placed yourselves for an instant in that situation, you will learn to sympathize with those unhappy countries which have sustained the ravages of arms. But how is it possible to give you an idea of these horrors? Here you behold rich harvests, the bounty of heaven, and the reward of industry, consumed in a moment, or trampled under foot, while famine and pestilence follow the steps of desolation. There the cottages of peasants given up to the flames, mothers expiring through fear, not for themselves, but their infants; the inhabitants flying with their helpless babes in all directions, miserable fugitives on their native soil! In another part you witness opulent cities taken by storm; the streets, where no sounds were heard but those of peaceful industry, filled on a sudden with slaughter and blood, resounding with the cries of the pursuing and the pursued; the palaces of nobles demolished, the houses of the rich pillaged, the chastity of virgins and of matrons violated, and every age, sex, and rank, mingled in promiscuous massacre and ruin.

If we consider the maxims of war which prevailed in the ancient world, and which still prevail in many barbarous nations, we perceive that those who survive the fury of battle and the insolence of victory, were only reserved for more durable calamities; swept into hopeless captivity, exposed in markets, or plunged in mines, with the melancholy distinction bestowed on princes and warriors, after appearing in the triumphal procession of the conqueror, of being conducted to instant death. The contemplation

of such scenes as these, forces on us this awful reflection; that neither the fury of wild beasts, the concussions of the earth, nor the violence of tempests, are to be compared to the ravages of arms; and that nature in her utmost extent, or, more properly, divine justice in its utmost severity, has supplied no enemy to man so terrible as man.

Still however, it would be happy for mankind if the effects of national hostility terminated here; but the fact is, that they who are farthest removed from its immediate desolations, share largely in the calamity. They are drained of the most precious part of their population, their youth, to repair the waste made by the sword. They are drained of their wealth, by the prodigious expense incurred in the equipment of fleets, and the subsistence of armies in remote parts. The accumulation of debt and taxes diminishes the public strength, and depresses private industry. An augmentation in the price of the necessaries of life, inconvenient to all classes, falls with peculiar weight on the laboring poor, who must carry their industry to market every day, and therefore cannot wait for that advance of price which gradually attaches to every other article. Of all people the poor are on this account the greatest sufferers by war, and have the most reason to rejoice in the restoration of peace. As it is the farthest from my purpose to awaken unpleasing reflections, or to taint the pure satisfaction of this day, by the smallest infusion of political acrimony, it will not be expected I should apply these remarks to the peculiar circumstances of this country, though it would be unpardonable in us to forget (for to forget our danger is to forget our mercies) how nearly we have been reduced to famine, principally it is true, through a failure in the crops, but greatly aggravated, no doubt, in its pressure, by our being engaged in a war of unexampled expenditure and extent.

In commercial states (of which Europe principally consists) whatever interrupts their intercourse is a fatal blow to national prosperity. Such states having a mutual dependence on each other, the effects of their hostility extend far beyond the parties engaged in the contest. If there be a country highly commercial, which has a decided superiority in wealth and industry, together with a fleet which enables it to protect its trade, the commerce of such a country may survive the shock, but it is at the expense of the commerce of all other nations; a painful reflection to a generous mind. Even there the usual channels of trade being closed, it is some time before it can force a new passage for itself; previous to which, an almost total stagnation takes place, by which multitudes are impoverished, and thousands of the industrious poor, being thrown out of employment, are plunged into wretch-

edness and beggary. Who can calculate the number of industrious families in different parts of the world, to say nothing of our own country, who have been reduced to poverty, from this cause, since the peace of Europe was interrupted!

The plague of a widely extended war, possesses, in fact, a sort of omnipresence, by which it makes itself every where felt; for, while it gives up myriads to slaughter in one part of the globe, it is busily employed in scattering over countries, exempt from its immediate desolations, the seeds of famine, pestilence, and death.

If statesmen, if Christian statesmen at least, had a proper feeling on this subject, and would open their hearts to the reflections which such scenes must inspire, instead of rushing eagerly to arms from the thirst of conquest, or the thirst of gain, would they not hesitate long, would they not try every expedient, every lenient art consistent with national honor, before they ventured on this desperate remedy, or rather, before they plunged into this gulf of horror?

It is time to proceed to another view of the subject, which is, the influence of national warfare on the morals of mankind; a topic on which I must be very brief, but which it would be wrong to omit, as it supplies an additional reason to every good man for the love of peace.

The contests of nations are both the offspring and the parent of injustice. The word of God ascribes the existence of war to the disorderly passions of men. *Whence come wars and fightings among you?* saith the Apostle James, *come they not from your lusts that war in your members?* It is certain two nations cannot engage in hostilities, but one party must be guilty of injustice; and if the magnitude of crimes is to be estimated by a regard to their consequences, it is difficult to conceive an action of equal guilt with the wanton violation of peace. Though something must generally be allowed for the complexness and intricacy of national claims, and the consequent liability to deception, yet where the guilt of an unjust war is clear and manifest, it sinks every other crime into insignificance. If the existence of war always *implies* injustice, in one at least of the parties concerned, it is also the fruitful parent of crimes. It reverses, with respect to its objects, all the rules of morality. It is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue. It is a system out of which almost all the virtues are excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are incorporated. Whatever renders human nature amiable or respectable, whatever engages love or confidence, is sacrificed at its shrine. In instructing us to consider a portion of our fellow creatures as the proper objects of enmity, it removes, as far as they are concerned, the basis of all society, of all civiliza-

tion and virtue; for the basis of these is the good-will due to every individual of the species, as being a part of ourselves. From this principle all the rules of social virtue emanate. Justice and humanity, in their utmost extent, are nothing more than the practical application of this great law. The sword, and that alone, cuts asunder the bond of consanguinity, which unites man to man. As it immediately aims at the extinction of life, it is next to impossible, upon the principle that every thing may be lawfully done to him whom we have a right to kill, to set limits to military license: for when men pass from the dominion of reason to that of force, whatever restraints are attempted to be laid on the passions will be feeble and fluctuating. Though we must applaud, therefore, the attempts of the humane Grotius, to blend maxims of humanity with military operations, it is to be feared they will never coalesce, since the former imply the subsistence of those ties which the latter suppose to be dissolved. Hence the morality of peaceful ties is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter, to inflict injuries. The former commands us to succor the oppressed; the latter, to overwhelm the defenceless. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter, to make themselves terrible even to strangers. The rules of morality will not suffer us to promote the dearest interest by falsehood; the maxims of war applaud it when employed in the destruction of others. That a familiarity with such maxims must tend to harden the heart, as well as to pervert the moral sentiments, is too obvious to need illustration. The natural consequence of their prevalence is an unfeeling and unprincipled ambition, with an idolatry of talents, and a contempt of virtue; whence the esteem of mankind is turned from the humble, the beneficent, and the good, to men who are qualified by a genius fertile in expedients, a courage that is never appalled, and a heart that never pities, to become the destroyers of the earth. While the philanthropist is devising means to mitigate the evils and augment the happiness of the world, a fellow-worker together with God, in exploring and giving effect to the benevolent tendencies of nature, the warrior is revolving, in the gloomy recesses of his capacious mind, plans of future devastation and ruin. Prisons crowded with captives, cities emptied of their inhabitants, fields desolate and waste, are among his proudest trophies. The fabric of his fame is cemented with tears and blood; and if his name is wafted to the ends of the earth, it is in the shrill cry of suffering humanity; in the curses and imprecations of those whom his sword has reduced to despair.

Let me not be understood to involve in this guilt every man who engages in war, or to assert that war itself is in all cases un-

lawful. The injustice of mankind, hitherto incurable, renders it in some instances necessary, and therefore lawful; but unquestionably, these instances are much more rare than the practice of the world and its loose casuistry would lead us to suppose.

Detesting war, considered as a trade or profession, and conceiving conquerors to be the enemies of their species, it appears* to me that nothing is more suitable to the office of a Christian minister, than an attempt, however feeble, to take off the colors from false greatness, and to show the deformity which its delusive splendor too often conceals. This is perhaps one of the best services religion can do to society. Nor is there any more necessary. For dominion affording a plain and palpable distinction, and every man feeling the effects of power, however incompetent he may be to judge of wisdom and goodness, the character of a hero, there is reason to fear, will always be too dazzling. The sense of his injustice will be too often lost in the admiration of his success.

In contemplating the influence of war on public morals, it would be unpardonable not to remark the effects it never fails to produce in those parts of the world which are its immediate seat. The injury which the morals of a people sustain from an invading army is prodigious. The agitation and suspense universally prevalent, are incompatible with every thing that requires thought or serious reflection. In such a situation, is it any wonder the duties of piety fall into neglect, the sanctuary of God is forsaken, and the gates of Zion mourn and are desolate? Familiarized to the sight of rapine and slaughter, the people must acquire a hard and unfeeling character. The precarious tenure by which every thing is held during the absence of laws, must impair confidence; the sudden revolutions of fortune must be infinitely favorable to fraud and injustice. He who reflects on these consequences, will not think it too much to affirm, that the injury the virtue of a people sustains from invasion, is greater than that which affects their property or their lives. He will perceive that by such a calamity, the seeds of order, virtue, and piety, which it is the first care of education to implant and mature, are swept away as by a hurricane.

Though the sketch which I have attempted to give of the miseries which ensue when nation lifts up arms against nation, is faint and imperfect, it is yet sufficient to imprint on our minds a salutary horror of such scenes, and a gratitude, warm, I trust, and sincere, to that gracious Providence which has brought them to a close.

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* Non est inter artificia bellum, imo res est tam horrenda, ut eam nisi summa necessitas, aut vera caritas, honestam efficere queat. Augustino judice, militare non est delictum, sed propter prædam militare peccatum est.—*Grot. de Jure Bell. l.* 2, *c.* 25.

To acknowledge the hand of God is a duty indeed at all times; but there are seasons when it is made so bare, that it is next to impossible, and therefore signally criminal, to overlook it. It is almost unnecessary to add, that the present is one of those seasons. If ever we are expected to *be still, and know that he is God*, it is on the present occasion, after a crisis so unexampled in the annals of the world; during which, scenes have been disclosed, and events have arisen, so much more astonishing than any that history has recorded, or romance had feigned, that we are compelled to lose sight of human agency, and to behold the Deity acting as it were apart and alone.

The contest in which we have been lately engaged, is distinguished from all others in modern times by the number of nations it embraced, and the animosity with which it was conducted. Making its first appearance in the centre of the civilized world, like a fire kindled in the thickest part of a forest, it spread during ten years on every side, it burnt in all directions, gathering fresh fury in its progress, till it enwrapped the whole of Europe in its flames, an awful spectacle not only to the inhabitants of the earth, but in the eyes of superior beings! What place can we point out to which its effects have not extended? Where is the nation, the family, the individual, I might almost say, who has not felt its influence? It is not, my brethren, the termination of an ordinary contest which we are assembled this day to commemorate; it is an event which includes for the present (may it long perpetuate) the tranquillity of Europe and the pacification of the world. We are met to express our devout gratitude to God, for putting a period to a war, the most eventful perhaps that has been witnessed for a thousand years, a war which has transformed the face of Europe, removed the land-marks of nations and the limits of empire.

The spirit of animosity with which it has been conducted, is another circumstance which has eminently distinguished the recent contest. As it would be highly improper to enter on this occasion (were my abilities equal to the task) into a discussion of those principles which have divided, and probably will long divide the sentiments of men, it may be sufficient to observe in general, that what principally contributed to make the contest so peculiarly violent, was a discordancy betwixt the opinions and the institutions of society. A daring spirit of speculation, untempered, alas! by humility and devotion, has been the distinguishing feature of the present times. While it confined itself to the exposure of the corruptions of religion and the abuses of power, it met with some degree of countenance from the wise and good in all countries, who were ready to hope it was the instrument destined by Providence to meliorate the condition of mankind. How great was

their disappointment, when they perceived that pretensions to philanthropy were, with many, only a mask, assumed for the more successful propagation of impiety and anarchy!

From the prevalence of this spirit, however, a schism was gradually formed between the adherents of those, who, styling themselves philosophers, were intent on some great change, which they were little careful to explain, and the patrons of the ancient order of things. The pretensions of each were plausible. The accumulation of abuses and the corruptions of religion furnished weapons to the philosophers; the dangerous tendency of the speculations of these latter, together with their impiety, which became every day more manifest, gave an advantage not less considerable to their opponents, which they did not fail to improve. In this situation the breach grew wider and wider; nothing temperate or conciliating was admitted. Every attempt at purifying religion without impairing its authority, and at improving the condition of society, without shaking its foundation, was crushed and annihilated in the encounter of two hostile forces. By this means the way was prepared, first for internal dissension, and then for wars the most bloody and extensive.

The war in which so great a part of the world was lately engaged, has been frequently styled a war of principle. This was indeed its exact character; and it was this which rendered it so violent and obstinate. Disputes which are founded merely on passion or on interest, are comparatively of short duration. They are, at least, not calculated to spread. However they may inflame the principals, they are but little adapted to gain partisans.

To render them durable, there must be an infusion of speculative opinions. For corrupt as men are, they are yet so much the creatures of reflection, and so strongly addicted to sentiments of right and wrong, that their attachment to a public cause can rarely be secured, nor their animosity be kept alive, unless their understandings are engaged by some appearances of truth and rectitude. Hence speculative differences in religion and politics become rallying points to the passions. Whoever reflects on the civil wars between the Guelphs and the Ghibbelines, or the adherents of the Pope and the Emperor, which distracted Italy and Germany in the middle ages; or those betwixt the houses of York and Lancaster, in the fifteenth century, will find abundant confirmation of this remark. This is well understood by the leaders of parties in all nations; who, though they frequently aim at nothing more than the attainment of power, yet always contrive to cement the attachment of their followers, by mixing some speculative opinion with their contests, well knowing that what depends for support merely on the irascible passions soon subsides. Then

does party animosity reach its height, when to an interference of interests sufficient to kindle resentment, is superadded a persuasion of rectitude, a conviction of truth, an apprehension in each party that they are contending for principles of the last importance, on the success of which the happiness of millions depends. Under these impressions men are apt to indulge the most selfish and vindictive passions without suspicion or control. The understanding indeed, in that state, instead of controlling the passions, often serves only to give steadiness to their impulse, to ratify and consecrate, so to speak, all their movements.

When we apply these remarks to the late contest, we can be at no loss to discover the source of the unparalleled animosity which inflamed it. Never before were so many opposing interests, passions, and principles committed to such a decision. On one side an attachment to the ancient order of things, on the other a passionate desire of change; a wish in some to perpetuate, in others to destroy every thing; every abuse sacred in the eyes of the former, every foundation attempted to be demolished by the latter; a jealousy of power shrinking from the slightest innovation, pretensions to freedom pushed to madness and anarchy; superstition in all its dotage, impiety in all its fury; whatever, in short, could be found most discordant in the principles, or violent in the passions of men, were the fearful ingredients which the hand of Divine Justice selected to mingle in this furnace of wrath. Can we any longer wonder at the desolations it made in the earth? Great as they are, they are no more than might be expected from the peculiar nature of the warfare. When we take this into our consideration, we are no longer surprised to find that the variety of its battles burdens the memory, that the imagination is perfectly fatigued in travelling over its scenes of slaughter; and that falling, like the mystic star in the Apocalypse, *upon the streams and the rivers, it turned the third part of their waters into blood.**

Whether the foundations of lasting tranquillity are laid, or a respite only afforded to the nations of the earth, in the present auspicious event, is a question, the discussion of which would only damp the satisfaction of this day. Whatever may be the future determinations of Providence, let no gloomy foreboding depress our gratitude for its gracious interposition in our favor. While we feel sentiments of respectful acknowledgement to the human instruments employed, let us remember they are but instruments,

* The author has inserted some reflections here, which were not included in the discourse as delivered from the pulpit. He wished to explain himself somewhat more fully on certain points, on which his sentiments in a former publication have been much misunderstood or misrepresented. But this is a circumstance, with which, as it has not troubled himself, he wishes not any farther to trouble the reader.

and that it is our duty to look through them to Him who is the Author of every good and perfect gift.

Let us now turn to the pleasing part of our subject, which invites us to contemplate the reasons for gratitude and joy suggested by the restoration of peace.

Permit me to express my hope, that along with peace the spirit of peace will return. How can we better imitate our heavenly Father, than when he is pleased to compose the animosities of nations, to open our hearts to every milder influence. Let us hope, more mutual forbearance, a more candid construction of each other's views and sentiments will prevail. No end can now be answered by the revival of party disputes. The speculations which gave occasion to them have been yielded to the arbitration of the sword, and neither the fortune of war nor the present condition of Europe, is such as affords to any party room for high exultation. Our public and private affections are no longer at variance. That benevolence which embraces the world is now in perfect harmony with the tenderness that endears our country. Burying in oblivion, therefore, all national antipathies, together with those cruel jealousies and suspicions which have too much marred the pleasures of mutual intercourse, let our hearts correspond to the blessing we celebrate, and keep pace as far as possible with the movements of divine beneficence.

A most important benefit has already followed the return of peace, a reduction of the price of bread, and though other necessaries of life have not fallen in proportion, this is a circumstance which can hardly fail to follow. We trust the circumstances of the poor and the laboring classes will be much improved, and that there will shortly be no complaining in our streets. Every cottager, we hope, will feel that there is peace, commerce will return to its ancient channels, the public burdens be lightened, the national debt diminished, and harmony and plenty again gladden the land.

In enumerating the motives to national gratitude, which the retrospect of the past supplies, it would be unpardonable not to reckon among the most cogent, the preservation of our excellent constitution: nor can I doubt of the concurrence of all who hear me, when I add, it is a pleasing reflection, that at a period when the spirit of giddiness and revolt has been so prevalent, we have preferred the blessings of order to a phantom of liberty, and have not been so mad as to wade through the horrors of a revolution to make way for a military despot. If the constitution has sustained serious injury, either during the war, or at any preceding period, as there is great room to apprehend, we shall have leisure (may we but have virtue!) to apply temperate and effectual reforms.

In the mean time, let us love it sincerely, cherish it tenderly, and secure it as far as possible on all sides, watching with impartial solicitude against every thing that may impair its spirit, or endanger its form.

But, above all, let us cherish the spirit of religion. When we wish to open our hearts on this subject, and to represent to you the vanity, the nothingness of every thing else in comparison, we feel ourselves checked by an apprehension you will consider it merely as professional language, and consequently entitled to little regard. If, however, you will only turn your eyes to the awful scenes before you, our voice may be spared. They will speak loud enough of themselves. On this subject they will furnish the most awful and momentous instruction. From them you will learn, that the safety of nations is not to be sought in arts or in arms; that science may flourish amidst the decay of humanity; that the utmost barbarity may be blended with the utmost refinement; that a passion for speculation, unrestrained by the fear of God, and a deep sense of human imperfection, merely hardens the heart; and that as religion, in short, is the great tamer of the breast, the source of tranquillity and order, so the crimes of voluptuousness and impiety inevitably conduct a people, before they are aware, to the brink of desolation and anarchy.

If you had wished to figure to yourselves a country which had reached the utmost pinnacle of prosperity, you would undoubtedly have turned your eyes to France, as she appeared a few years before the revolution; illustrious in learning and genius; the favorite abode of the arts, and the mirror of fashion, whither the flower of the nobility from all countries resorted, to acquire the last polish of which the human character is susceptible. Lulled in voluptuous repose, and dreaming of a philosophical millennium, without dependence upon God, like the generation before the flood, *they ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage.* In that exuberant soil every thing seemed to flourish but religion and virtue. The season however had at length arrived, when God was resolved to punish their impiety, as well as to avenge the blood of his servants, whose souls had for a century been incessantly crying to him from under the altar. And what method did he employ for this purpose? When He to whom vengeance belongs, when He whose ways are unsearchable, and whose wisdom is inexhaustible, proceeded to the execution of this strange work, he drew from his treasures a weapon he had never employed before. Resolving to make their punishment as signal as their crimes, he neither let loose an inundation of barbarous nations, nor the desolating powers of the universe; he neither overwhelmed them with earthquakes, nor visited them with pestilence. He summoned

from among themselves a ferocity more terrible than either, a ferocity which, mingling in the struggle for liberty, and borrowing aid from that very refinement to which it seemed to be opposed, turned every man's hand against his neighbor, and sparing no age, nor sex, nor rank, till satiated with the ruin of greatness, the distresses of innocence, and the tears of beauty, it terminated its career in the most unrelenting despotism. *Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and which was, and which shall be, because thou hast judged thus; for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.*

If the weakness of humanity will not permit us to keep pace with the movements of divine justice; if, from the deep commisseration excited by the view of so much wo, our tongue falters in expressing those sublime sentiments of triumph which Revelation suggests on this occasion, we shall be pardoned by the Being who knows our frame; while nothing can prevent us, at least, from adoring this illustrious vindication of his own religion, whose divinity we see is not less apparent in the blessings it bestows, than in the calamities which mark its departure.

Our only security against similar calamities is a steady adherence to this religion; not the religion of mere form and profession, but that which has its seat in the heart; nor as it is mutilated and debased by the refinements of a false philosophy, but as it exists in all its simplicity and extent in the Sacred Scriptures; consisting in sorrow for sin, in the love of God, and in faith in a crucified Redeemer. If this religion revives and flourishes amongst us, we may still surmount all our difficulties, and no weapon formed against us will prosper; if we despise or neglect it, no human power can afford us protection. Instead of shewing our love to our country, therefore, by engaging eagerly in the strife of parties, let us choose to signalize it rather by beneficence, by piety, by an exemplary discharge of the duties of private life, under a persuasion that that man, in the final issue of things, will be seen to have been the best patriot, who is the best Christian. He who diffuses the most happiness, and mitigates the most distress within his own circle, is undoubtedly the best friend to his country and the world, since nothing more is necessary, than for all men to imitate his conduct, to make the greatest part of the misery of the world cease in a moment. While the passion, then, of some is to shine, of some to govern, and of others to accumulate, let one great passion alone inflame our breasts, the passion which reason ratifies, which conscience approves, which Heaven inspires, that of being and of doing good.

There is no vanity, I trust, in supposing that the reflections

which this discourse has presented to your view, have awakened those sentiments of gratitude to the Father of Mercies for his gracious interposition in the restoration of peace, which you are impatient to express by stronger evidence than words. Should this be the case, a plain path is before you. While the eminence of the divine perfections renders it impossible for us to contribute to the happiness, or augment the glory of the Creator, he has left amongst us, for the exercise of our virtue, the indigent and the afflicted, whom he has in an especial manner committed to our care, and appointed to represent himself. The objects of the institution, for which I have this day the honor to plead, are those of whom the very mention is sufficient to excite compassion in every feeling mind, *the sick and the aged poor.** To be scantily provided with the necessaries of life, to endure cold, hunger, and nakedness, is a great calamity at all seasons; it is almost unnecessary to observe how much these evils are aggravated by the pressure of disease, when exhausted nature demands whatever the most tender assiduity can supply to cheer its languor and support its sufferings. It is the peculiar misfortune of the afflicted poor, that the very circumstance which increases their wants, cuts off, by disqualifying them for labor, the means of their supply. Bodily affliction, therefore, falls upon them with an accumulated weight. Poor at best, when seized with sickness, they become utterly destitute. Incapable even of presenting themselves to the eye of pity, nothing remains for them, but silently to yield themselves up to sorrow and despair. The second class of objects, which it is the design of this society to relieve, are *the aged poor.* Here it is quite unnecessary for me to attempt to paint to you the sorrows of old age; a period indeed which, by a strange inconsistency, we all wish to reach, while we shrink with a sort of horror from the infirmities and sufferings inseparable from that melancholy season. What can be a more pitiable object than decrepitude, sinking under the accumulated load of years and of penury? Arrived at that period when the most fortunate confess they have no pleasure, how forlorn is his situation, who, destitute of the means of subsistence, has survived his last child, or his last friend! Solitary and neglected, without comfort and without hope, depending for every thing on a kindness he has no means of conciliating, he finds himself left alone in a world to which he has ceased to belong,

* It may be proper to remind the reader, that this Discourse was preached for the benefit of a benevolent society, recently instituted at Cambridge, for the relief of the sick and aged poor; and that one principal motive with the author for complying with the request of the Society in publishing it, was a desire to excite the attention of the benevolent to the formation of similar societies in other parts. A further account of the Institution will be found at the end of the Sermon.

and is only felt in society as a burden it is impatient to shake off. Such are the objects to which this Institution solicits your regard.

It is, in my humble opinion, a most excellent part of the plan of the Society, in whose behalf I address you, that no relief is administered without first personally visiting the objects in their own abode. By this means the precise circumstances of each case are clearly ascertained, and imposture is sure to be detected. Where charity is administered without this precaution, as it is impossible to discriminate real from pretended distress, the most disinterested benevolence often fails of its purpose, and that is yielded to clamorous importunity which is withheld from lonely want. The mischief extends much farther. From the frequency of such imposition, the best minds are in danger of becoming disgusted with the exercise of pecuniary charity, till from a mistaken persuasion, that it is impossible to guard against deception, they treat the most abandoned and the most deserving with the same neglect. Thus the heart contracts into selfishness, and those delicious emotions which the benevolent Author of nature implanted to prompt us to relieve distress, become extinct; a loss greater to ourselves than to the objects to whom we deny our compassion. To prevent a degradation of character so fatal, allow me to urge on all whom Providence has blessed with the means of doing good, on those especially who are indulged with affluence and leisure, the importance of devoting some portion of their time in *inspecting*, as well as of their property in *relieving*, the distresses of the poor.

By this means an habitual tenderness will be cherished, which will heighten inexpressibly the happiness of life, at the same time that it will most effectually counteract that selfishness which a continual addictedness to the pursuits of avarice and ambition never fails to produce. As selfishness is a principle of continual operation, it needs to be opposed by some other principle, whose operation is equally uniform and steady; but the casual impulse of compassion, excited by occasional applications for relief, is by no means equal to this purpose. Then only will benevolence become a prevailing habit of mind, when its exertion enters into the *system* of life, and occupies some stated portion of the time and attention. In addition to this, it is worth while to reflect how much consolation the poor must derive from finding they are the objects of personal attention to their more opulent neighbors, that they are acknowledged as brethren of the same family, and that should they be overtaken with affliction or calamity, they are in no danger of perishing unpitied and unnoticed. With all the pride that wealth is apt to inspire, how seldom are the opulent truly aware of their high destination. Placed by the Lord of all on an eminence, and entrusted with a superior portion of his goods, to them it belongs

to be dispensers of his bounty, to succor distress, to draw merit from obscurity, to behold oppression and want vanish before them, and accompanied wherever they move with perpetual benedictions, to present an image of Him, who at the close of time, in the kingdom of the redeemed, will *wipe away tears from all faces*. It is surely unnecessary to remark how insipid are the pleasures of voluptuousness and ambition compared to what such a life must afford, whether we compare them with respect to the present, the review of the past, or the prospect of the future.

It is probable some may object, that such exertions, however amiable in themselves, are rendered unnecessary by the system of parochial relief, established in this country. To which it is obvious to reply, that however useful this institution may be, there must always be a great deal of distress, which it can never relieve. Like all national institutions, it is incapable of bending from the rigor of general rules, so as to adapt itself to the precise circumstances of each respective case. Besides that it would be vain to expect much tenderness in the execution of a legal office, the machine itself, though it may be well suited to the general purpose it is intended to answer, is too large and unwieldy to touch those minute points of difference, those distinct kinds and gradations of distress, to which the operation of personal benevolence will easily adapt itself. In addition to which, it will occur to those who reflect, that, on account of the increasing demands of the poor, the parochial system, which presses hard upon many ill able to bear it, is already strained to the utmost.

Although the society in whose behalf I address you, is but recently established, it has been enabled painfully to ascertain the vast proportion of its objects of the female sex, a melancholy circumstance, deserving the serious attention of the public on more accounts than one. Of the cases which have occurred to their notice, since the commencement of their labors, more than three fourths have been of that description. The situation of females without fortune in this country is indeed deeply affecting. Excluded from all the active employments, in which they might engage with the utmost propriety, by men, who to the injury of one sex, add the disgrace of making the other effeminate and ridiculous, an indigent female, the object probably of love and tenderness in her youth, at a more advanced age, a withered flower! has nothing to do but to retire and die. Thus it comes to pass, that the most amiable part of our species, by a detestable combination in those who ought to be their protectors, are pushed off the stage, as though they were no longer worthy to live, when they ceased to be the objects of passion. How strongly on this account, this society is entitled to your attention (as words would fail,) I leave to the pensive reflection of your own bosoms.

To descant on the evils of poverty might seem entirely unnecessary (for what with most is the great business of life, but to remove it to the greatest possible distance?) were it not that, besides its being the most common of all evils, there are circumstances peculiar to itself, which expose it to neglect. The seat of its sufferings are the appetites, not the passions; appetites which are common to all, and which, being capable of no peculiar combinations, confer no distinction. There are kinds of distress founded on the passions, which, if not applauded, are at least admired in their excess, as implying a peculiar refinement of sensibility in the mind of the sufferer. Embellished by taste, and wrought by the magic of genius into innumerable forms, they turn grief into a luxury, and draw from the eyes of millions delicious tears. But no muse ever ventured to adorn the distresses of poverty or the sorrows of hunger. Disgusting taste and delicacy, and presenting nothing pleasing to the imagination, they are mere misery in all its nakedness and deformity. Hence shame in the sufferer, contempt in the beholder, and an obscurity of station, which frequently removes them from the view, are their inseparable portion. Nor can I reckon it, on this account, among the improvements of the present age, that by the multiplication of works of fiction, the attention is diverted from scenes of real to those of imaginary distress; from the distress which demands relief, to that which admits of embellishment; in consequence of which the understanding is enervated, the heart is corrupted, and those feelings which were designed to stimulate to active benevolence are employed in nourishing a sickly sensibility. To a most impure and whimsical writer,* whose very humanity is unnatural, we are considerably indebted for this innovation. Though it cannot be denied, that by diffusing a warmer coloring over the visions of fancy, sensibility is often a source of exquisite pleasures to others, if not to the possessor, yet it should never be confounded with benevolence; since it constitutes at best rather the ornament of a fine, than the virtue of a good mind. A good man may have nothing of it, a bad man may have it in abundance.

Leaving therefore these amusements of the imagination to the vain and indolent, let us awake to nature and truth, and in a world from which we must so shortly be summoned, a world abounding with so many real scenes of heart-rending distress as well as of vice and impiety, employ all our powers in relieving the one and in correcting the other, that when we have arrived at the

* The author alludes to Sterne, the whole tendency of whose writings is to degrade human nature, by resolving all our passions into a mere animal instinct, and that of the grossest sort. It was perfectly natural for such a writer to employ his powers in panegyrizing an ass.

borders of eternity, we may not be tormented with the awful reflection of having lived in vain.

If ever there was a period when poverty made a more forcible appeal than usual to the heart, it is unquestionably that which we have lately witnessed, the calamities of which, though greatly diminished by the auspicious event which we now celebrate, are far from being entirely removed. Poverty used in happier times to be discerned in a superior meanness of apparel and the total absence of ornament. We have seen its ravages reach the *man*, proclaiming themselves in the trembling step, in the dejected countenance, and the faded form. We have seen emaciated infants, no ruddiness in their cheeks, no sprightliness in their motions, while the eager and imploring looks of their mothers, reduced below the loud expressions of grief, have announced unutterable anguish and silent despair.

From the reflections which have been made on the peculiar nature of poverty, you will easily account for the prodigious stress which is laid on the duty of pecuniary benevolence in the Old and New Testament. In the former, God delighted in assuming the character of the patron of the poor and needy; in the latter, the short definition of the religion which he approves, *is to visit the fatherless and the widow, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*. He who knew what was in man, well knew that, since the entrance of sin, selfishness was become the epidemic disease of human nature; a malady which almost every thing tends to inflame, and the conquest of which is absolutely necessary, before we can be prepared for the felicity of heaven; that whatever leads us out of ourselves, whatever unites us to him and his creatures in pure love, is an important step towards the recovery of his image; and finally, that his church would consist for the most part of *the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, whom he was resolved to shield from the contempt of all those who do not respect his authority, by selecting them from the innumerable millions of mankind to be the peculiar representatives of himself.

Happy are they whose lives correspond to these benevolent intentions; who looking beyond the transitory distinctions which prevail here, and will vanish at the first approach of eternity, honor God in his children, and Christ in his image. How much, on the contrary, are those to be pitied, in whatever sphere they move, who live to themselves, unmindful of the coming of their Lord. *When he shall come and shall not keep silence, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him*, every thing, it is true, will combine to fill them with consternation; yet, methinks, neither the voice of the Archangel, nor the

trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible to these men as the sight of the poor members of Christ; whom, having spurned and neglected in the days of their humiliation, they will then behold with amazement united to their Lord, covered with his glory, and seated on his throne. How will they be astonished to see them surrounded with so much majesty. How will they cast down their eyes in their presence. How will they curse that gold, which will then eat their flesh as with fire, and that avarice, that indolence, that voluptuousness, which will entitle them to so much misery! You will then learn that the imitation of Christ is the only wisdom; you will then be convinced it is better to be endeared to the cottage, than admired in the palace, when to have wiped the tears of the afflicted, and inherited the prayers of the widow, and the fatherless, shall be found a richer patrimony than the favor of princes.

ACCOUNT

OF

THE BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,

FOR THE RELIEF OF THE SICK AND AGED POOR

INSTITUTED AT CAMBRIDGE, 1801.*

Blessed is he that *considereth* the Poor....Psalm xli. 1.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me....Matt. xxv. 40.

That benevolence is an habitual duty, arising out of our constitution as rational and social creatures, and enforced upon us by the most powerful motives as Christians, no one will deny. The various exertions of the humane and the pious, in private circles and in public institutions, are so many proofs of the truth of this sentiment; but notwithstanding those exertions, there is still ample room for enlargement. Those persons who are in the habit of visiting the cottages, or the chambers of the poor, are too frequently the melancholy witnesses of that extreme poverty, pining sickness and poignant distress, which energetically call for relief.

With the design of administering, in some degree, such relief, a number of persons, have formed themselves into a Society, the nature and objects of which are such, that it may with the greatest truth be said, to *deserve*, and it can scarcely be doubted but it

* As the preceding Sermon was preached for the benefit of this Society, and the author, in a preceding note, has referred the reader to this exposé, its insertion in this place, will not be deemed inappropriate. Ed.

will meet with such encouragement as may render it a blessing to the poor of the town of Cambridge. It is likewise ardently hoped, that the Society will meet with such farther encourgement, that its benevolent exertions may not be confined to the town, but extended to the neighboring villages.

The *first* object of the Society is to afford *pecuniary assistance* to the *sick* and the *aged poor*. To select proper objects, and guard against the abuses attending indiscriminate relief, visitors will be appointed to examine, and judge of the nature of every case, and to report the same to a Committee of the Society.

The second object of the Society is—The *moral* and *religious* improvement of the objects relieved. *A word spoken in due season* (says the Wise Man) *how good is it!* The hour of affliction the bed of sickness, afford the most seasonable opportunities for usefulness; and it is hoped, that the heart may in a more peculiar manner be open to the best of impressions at such a season, and when under a sense of obligation for relief already administered.

In a Society like the present, all distinctions of sects and parties are lost in the one general design of *doing good;* and the success which has attended Societies, nearly similar, in different parts of this kingdom, and more particularly in the metropolis, in relieving the distress and ameliorating the condition of thousands and tens of thousands of our fellow creatures, affords reason to hope, that under the divine blessing, similar success will attend the Society established in this town.

RULES OF THE SOCIETY.

I. Any person, of whatever denomination, age or sex, disposed to assist this benevolent undertaking, may be admitted a subscriber; each subscriber on admission, to pay *not less* than one shilling, and from two pence per week to any sum such subscriber may think proper.

II. That the business of this Society be managed by a Committee of fourteen persons, including the Treasurer and Secretary; five of whom shall be competent to transact business;—that the Committee be open to any member of the Society, who may think proper to attend. In case of any vacancy in the Committee, by death, or resignation, the remaining members of the Committee be empowered to fill up such vacancy.

III. That the Committee meet monthly, at each other's houses, to receive reports, consider of cases, appoint visitors, and audit their accounts.

IV. That there be an annual general meeting, of which due notice will be given, when the state of the Society shall be reported, and the Treasurer, Secretary, and Committee appointed, to manage the concerns thereof.

V. That the *sick* and the *aged* be esteemed the *only* objects of the compassion of this Society, and when the fund is reduced to the sum of five pounds, the cases of the sick alone shall be attended to.

VI. That no member be allowed to recommend a case, until three months after his or her subscription hath commenced, nor if four months in arrears, until such arrears be discharged, provided they have received notice of the same.

VII. That no case be received but from a subscriber, who is expected to be well acquainted with the case recommended, and to report the particulars to one of the visitors.

VIII. That the visitors be appointed to administer relief, and not the person who recommends the case.

IX. That no subscribers, while they continue such, shall receive any relief from this Society, nor shall any of those who conduct the business thereof receive any gratuity for their services.

THE SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE PRESENT CRISIS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

BRIDGE STREET, BRISTOL, ENGLAND,

OCTOBER, 19, 1803;

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED

FOR

A GENERAL FAST.

A

SERMON.

JEREMIAH, CHAP. 8: VERSE 6.

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

THOUGH we are well assured the Divine Being is attentive to the conduct of men at all times, yet it is but reasonable to believe he is peculiarly so whilst they are under his correcting hand. As *he does not willingly afflict the children of men*, he is wont to do it slowly, and at intervals, waiting, if we may so speak, to see whether the preceding chastisement will produce those sentiments which shall appease his anger, or confirm his resolution to punish. When sincere humiliation and sorrow for past offences take place, his displeasure subsides, he relents and *repents himself of the evil.* Thus he speaks by the mouth of Jeremiah: *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*

We are this day assembled at the call of our sovereign, to humble ourselves in the presence of Almighty God, under a sense of our sins, and to implore his interposition, that we may not be delivered into the hands of our enemies, nor fall a prey to the malice of those who hate us. It is surely, then, of the utmost consequence to see to it, that our humiliation be deep, our repentance sincere, and the dispositions we cherish, as well as the resolutions we form, suitable to the nature of the crisis, and the solemnity of the occasion; such, in a word, as Omniscience will approve.

In the words of the text, the Lord reproaches the people of Is-

rael with not speaking aright, and complains that, while he was waiting to hear the language of penitential sorrow and humiliation, he witnessed nothing but an insensibility to his reproofs, an obstinate perseverance in guilt, with a fatal eagerness to rush to their former course. *He hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented himself of his iniquity, nor said, what have I done? but every one rushed to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.*

As the principles of the divine administration are invariable, and the situation of Great Britain, at this moment, not altogether unlike that of Israel at the time this portion of prophecy was penned, perhaps we cannot better improve the present solemnity, than by taking occasion from the words before us, to point out some of those sentiments and views which appear in the present crisis not to be *right*, and after exploding these, to endeavor to substitute more correct ones in their stead.

1. They who content themselves with an attempt to trace national judgements to their natural causes, without looking any higher, entertain a view of the subject very inadequate to the demands of the present season. When you have traced to the effects of an unparalleled convulsion on the continent, to the relative situation of foreign powers, to the turbulent passions and insatiable ambition of an individual, the evils which threaten us, what have you done to mitigate those evils? What alleviation have you afforded to perplexity and distress? They still exist in all their force. Far be it from me to attempt to discourage political inquiry. An inquiry into the sources of great events, an attempt to develope the more hidden causes which influence, under God, the destiny of nations, is an exercise of the mental powers more noble than almost any other, inasmuch as it embraces the widest field, and grasps a chain whose links are the most numerous, complicated, and subtile. The most profound political speculations, however, the most refined theories of government, though they establish the fame of their authors, will be found, perhaps, to have had very little influence on the happiness of nations. As the art of criticism never made an orator or a poet, though it enables us to judge of their merits, so the comprehensive speculation of modern times, which has reviewed and compared the manners and institutions of every age and country, has never formed a wise government or a happy people. It arrives too late for that purpose, since it owes its existence to an extensive survey of mankind, under a vast variety of forms, through all those periods of national improvement and decay, in which the happiest efforts of wisdom and policy have been already made. The welfare of a nation depends much less on the refined wisdom of the few, than on the

manners and character of the many; and as moral and religious principles have the chief influence in forming that character, so an acknowledgement of the hand of God, a deep sense of his dominion, is amongst the first of those principles. While we attend to the operation of second causes, let us never forget that there is a Being who is placed above them, who can move and arrange them at pleasure, and in whose hands they never fail to accomplish the purposes of his unerring counsel. The honor of the Supreme Ruler requires that his supremacy should be acknowledged, his agency confessed; nor is there any thing which he more intends by his chastisements than to extort this confession, or any thing he more highly resents, than an attempt to exclude him from the concerns of his own world. *Woe unto them* (saith Isaiah) *that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue till night, until wine inflame them; and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands*—Isaiah 5: 11. The same prophet complains, that while the hand of Jehovah was lifted up they would not see; but he adds, *they shall see.* If lighter chastisements will not suffice, he has heavier in reserve; if they despise his reproofs, he will *render his anger with fury, his rebukes with flames of fire:* he is resolved to overcome; and what must be the issue of a contest with Omnipotence, it is as easy to foresee as it is painful to contemplate.

2. They *speak not aright*, who, instead of placing their reliance on God for safety, repose only on an arm of flesh. The perfect unanimity which prevails, the ardor to defend every thing dear to us, which is expressed by all classes, the sacrifices cheerfully made, the labors sustained, and the mighty preparations by sea and land, which the vigilance of government has set on foot to repel the enemy from our coasts, or insure his discomfiture should he arrive, must be highly satisfactory to every well disposed mind. They afford, as far as human means can afford, a well founded prospect of success. Though there is, on this account, no room to despond, but much on the contrary to lead us to anticipate a favorable issue to the contest; yet nothing, surely, can justify that language of extravagant boast, that proud confidence in our national force, without any acknowledged dependence upon God, which, however fashionable it may be, is as remote from the dictates of true courage as of true piety. True courage is firm and unassuming; true piety serious and humble. In the midst of all our preparations, we shall, if we are wise, repose our chief confidence in Him who has every element at his disposal; who can easily disconcert the wisest counsels, confound the mightiest pro-

jects, and save when he pleases, by many or by few. While the vanity of such a pretended reliance on Providence as supersedes the use of means, is readily confessed, it is to be feared we are not sufficiently careful to guard against a contrary extreme, in its ultimate effects not less dangerous. If to depend on the interposition of Providence without human exertion, be to tempt God, and to confide in an arm of flesh, without seeking his aid, is to deny him; the former is to be pitied for its weakness, the latter to be censured for its impiety; nor is it easy to say which affords the worst omen of success. Let us avoid both these extremes; availing ourselves of all the resources which wisdom can suggest, or energy produce; let us still feel and acknowledge our absolute dependence upon God. With humble and contrite hearts, with filial confidence and affection, let us flee to his arms, that thus we may enjoy the united supports of reason and religion, and every principle, human and divine, may concur to assure us of our safety. Thus shall we effectually shun the denunciations so frequent and so terrible, contained in his holy word, against the vanity of human confidences. *Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.*

3. Their conduct is not to be approved, who, in the present crisis, indulge in *wanton* and *indiscriminate* censure of the measures of our rulers. I say *wanton* and *indiscriminate*, because the privilege of censuring, with moderation and decency, the measures of government, is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can never lose its value in the eyes of the public, till it is licentiously abused. The temperate exercise of this privilege, is a most useful restraint on those errors and excesses, to which the possession of power supplies a temptation. The free expression of the public voice is capable of overawing those who have nothing beside to apprehend; and the tribunal of public opinion is one, whose decisions it is not easy for men, in the most elevated stations, to despise. To this we may add, that the unrestrained discussion of national affairs, not only *gives weight* to the sentiments, but is eminently adapted to *enlighten the minds* of a people, and, consequently, to increase that general fund of talent and information, from which the accomplishments even of statesmen themselves must be ultimately derived. While, therefore, we maintain this privilege with jealous care, let us be equally careful not to abuse it. There is a deference and respect, in my apprehension, due to civil governors *on account of their office*, which we are not permitted to violate, even when we are under the necessity of blaming their measures. When the Apostle Paul was betrayed into an intemperate expression of anger against the Jewish High Priest, from an ignorance of the station he occupied, he was no

sooner informed of this, than he apologized, and quoted a precept of the Mosaic law, which says, *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people;* in agreement with which, the New Testament subjoins to the duty of fearing God, that of honoring the king; and frequently and emphatically inculcates submission to civil rulers, not so much from a fear of their power, as from a respect for their office.

The ancient prophets, it is true, in the immediate discharge of their functions, appear to have treated kings and princes with no sort of ceremony. But before we establish their style into a precedent, let us recollect they were privileged persons, speaking expressly in the name of the Most High, who gave them his words, and invested them for the moment with a portion of his majesty.

Apart from the personal characters of rulers, which are fluctuating and variable, you will find the Apostles continually enjoin respect to government *as government*, as a permanent ordinance of God, susceptible of various modifications from human wisdom, but essential, under some form or other, to the existence of society; and affording a representation, faint and inadequate, it is true, but still a representation of the dominion of God over the earth. The wisdom of resting the duty of submission on this ground is obvious. The possession of office forms a plain and palpable distinction, liable to no ambiguity or dispute. Personal merits, on the contrary, are easily contested, so that if the obligation of obedience were founded on these, it would have no kind of force, nor retain any sort of hold on the conscience; the bonds of social order might be dissolved by an epigram or a song. The more liberal sentiments of respect for institutions being destroyed, nothing would remain to insure tranquillity but a servile fear of men. In the total absence of those sentiments, the mildest exertion of authority would be felt as an injury; authority would soon cease to be mild; and princes would have no alternative, but that of governing their subjects with the severe jealousy of a master over slaves impatient of revolt: so narrow is the boundary, which separates a licentious freedom from a ferocious tyranny. How incomparably more noble, salutary, and just, are the maxims the Apostles lay down on this subject. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever resisteth therefore the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also*

for conscience' sake. We shall do well to guard against any system which would withdraw the duties we owe to our rulers and to society from the jurisdiction of conscience; that principle of the mind, whose prerogative it is to prescribe to every other, and to pronounce that definitive sentence from which there is no appeal. A good man is accustomed to acquiesce in the idea of his duties as an ultimate object, without inquiring at every step why he should perform them, or amusing himself with imagining cases and situations in which they would be liable to limitations and exceptions. Instead of being curious after these, (for I do not deny that such exceptions exist) let the great general duty of submission be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of the mind, and made a part of our elementary morality.

At this season especially, when unanimity is so requisite, every endeavor to excite discontent, by reviling the character or depreciating the talents of those who are entrusted with the administration, is highly criminal. Without suspicion of flattery, we may be permitted to add, that the ardor of their zeal in the service of their country cannot be questioned; that the vast preparations they have made for our defence claim our gratitude; and that if, in a situation so arduous, and in the management of affairs so complicated and difficult, they have committed mistakes, they are amply entitled to a candid construction of their measures.

Having been detained by these reflections somewhat longer than was intended, it is high time to return to those religious considerations which are more immediately appropriate to the present season. I therefore proceed to add,

4. That they appear to entertain mistaken sentiments, who rely with too much confidence for success on our supposed superiority in virtue to our enemies. Such a confidence betrays inattention to the actual conduct of Providence. Wherever there is conscious guilt, there is room to apprehend punishment; nor is it for the criminal to decide where the merited punishment shall first fall. The cup of divine displeasure is presented successively to guilty nations, but it by no means invariably begins with those who have run the greatest career in guilt. On the contrary, *judgement often begins at the house of God;* and he frequently chastises his servants with severity, before he proceeds to the destruction of his enemies. He assured Abraham, his seed should be afflicted in Egypt for four hundred years, and that after their expiration, *the nation that afflicted them he would judge.* The Assyrian monarchs, blind and impious idolaters, were permitted for a long period to enslave and oppress the chosen people; after which, to use his own words, *he punished the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Babylon,* and having accomplished his design in their correction, cast the rod into the

fire. His conduct, on such occasions, resembles that of a parent, who, full of solicitude for the welfare of his children, animadverts upon faults in *them*, which he suffers to pass without notice in persons for whom he is less interested. Let us adore both the goodness and severity of God. The punishments which are designed to amend, are inflicted with comparative vigilance and speed; those which are meant to destroy, are usually long suspended, while the devoted victims pass on with seeming impunity.

But, independent of this consideration, that superiority in virtue which is claimed, may be neither so great nor so certain as we are ready at first to suppose. To decide on the comparative guilt of two individuals, much more of two nations, demands a more comprehensive knowledge of circumstances than we are usually able to obtain. To decide a question of this sort, it is not enough barely to inspect the manners of each; for the quality of actions, considered in themselves, is one thing, and the comparative guilt of the persons to whom they belong, is another. Before we can determine such a question, it is necessary to weigh and estimate the complicated influences to which they are exposed, the tendency of all their institutions, their respective degrees of information, and the comparative advantages and disadvantages under which they are placed. And who is equal to such a survey, but the Supreme Judge, to whom it belongs to decide on the character both of nations and individuals?

Our enemies it is true, in the moments of anarchy and madness, treated the religion of Jesus with an ostentation of insult, but it was not till that religion had been disguised, and almost concealed from their view, under a veil of falsehoods and impostures. The religion they rejected, debased by foreign infusions, mingled with absurd tenets, trifling superstitions, and cruel maxims, retained scarce any traces of the *truth as it is in Jesus*. The best of men were compelled to flee their country to avoid its persecuting fury, while the *souls under the altar* were employed day and night in accusing it before God. Religious inquiry was suppressed, the perusal of the word of God discountenanced, or rather prohibited, and that book, to loose whose seals the Lamb condescended to be slain, impiously closed by those who styled themselves its ministers. In this situation it is less surprising if the body of the people,* misled by pretended philosophers, lost sight of the feeble glimmerings of light which shone in the midst of so much obscurity. How far these considerations may extenuate, before the

* The author begs this remark may be understood to apply to the French people only, and not by any means to their infidel leaders. Of the infidelity of the latter, there needs no other solution to be given than the Scripture one: *They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Searcher of hearts, the guilt of our enemies, it remains with him to determine. It is certain our guilt is accompanied with no such extenuation. With us the darkness has long been past, and the true light has arisen upon us. We have long possessed the clearest display of divine truth, together with the fullest liberty of conscience. The mysteries of the gospel have been unveiled, and its sanctifying truths pressed on the conscience by those *who having received such a ministry, knew it to be their duty to use great plainness of speech.*

The language of invective, it is acknowledged, should be as carefully avoided in dispensing the word of God as that of adulation; but may we not, without apprehension, ask whether it is not a melancholy truth, that many of us have continued in the midst of all this light unchanged and impenitent; that if our enemies, with frantic impiety, renounced the forms of religion, we remain destitute of the power; and that if they abandoned the Christian name, the name is nearly the whole of Christianity to which we can pretend? Still we are ready, perhaps, to exclaim with the people of Israel in the context, *We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us.* Let us hear the prophet's reply: *Surely in vain hath he made it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.* That law is most emphatically in vain, which is the subject of boast without being obeyed. That dispensation of religion, however perfect, is in vain, which cherishes the pride, without forming the manners of a people. Were we, indeed, a religious people, were the traces of Christianity as visible in our lives as they are in our creeds and confessions, we might derive solid support from the comparison of ourselves with others; but if the contrary be the fact, and there are with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God, it will be our wisdom to relinquish this plea, and instead of boasting our superior virtue, to lie low in humiliation and repentance.

5. General lamentations and acknowledgements of the corruptions of the age, be they ever so well founded, fall very short of the real duties of this season. It is not difficult, however painful to a good mind, to descant on the luxury, the venality, the impiety of the age, the irreligion of the rich, the immorality of the poor, and the general forgetfulness of God which pervades all classes. Such topics it would be utterly improper to exclude. But to dwell on these alone, answers very little purpose. The sentiments they excite are too vague and indistinct to make a lasting impression. To invest ourselves with an imaginary character, to represent the nation to which we belong, and combining into one group the vices of the times, to utter loud lamentations, or violent invectives is an easy task.

But this, whatever it be, is not repentance. After bewailing in this manner, the sin of others, it is possible to continue quite unconcerned about our own. He who has been thus employed, may have been merely acting a part; uttering confessions in which he never meant to take a personal share. He would be mortally offended, perhaps, to have it suspected that he himself had been guilty of any one of the sins he has been deploring, or that he had contributed, in the smallest degree, to draw down the judgements he so solemnly deprecates. All has been transacted under a feigned character. Instead of *repenting himself of his iniquity, or saying, What have I done?* he secretly prides himself on his exemption from the general stain; and all the advantage he derives from his humiliations and confessions, is to become more deeply enamored of the perfections of what he supposes his real character. To such I would say, you are under a dangerous delusion, and the manner in which you perform the duties of this season completes that delusion. Your repentance, your feigned, your theatrical repentance, tends to fix you in impenitence, and your humiliation to make you proud. Whatever opinion you may entertain of the character of others, your chief concern is at home. When you have broken off your own sins by righteousness, you may, with a more perfect propriety, deplore the sins of the nation; you may intercede for it in your prayers, and, within the limits of your sphere, edify it by your example; but till you have taken this first, this necessary step, you have done nothing; and should the whole nation follow your example, and copy the spirit of your devotion, we should, after all, remain an impenitent, and finally a ruined people.

Allow me here, though it may seem a digression, to endeavor the correction of a mistake, which appears to me to have greatly perplexed, as well as abridged, the duties of seasons similar to the present. The mistake to which I allude, respects the true idea of *national sins*. Many seem to take it for granted, that nothing can justly be deemed a *national sin*, but what has the sanction of the legislature, or is committed under public authority. When they hear, therefore of national sins, they instantly revolve in their minds something which they apprehend to be criminal in the conduct of public affairs. That iniquity, when established by law, is more conspicuous, that it tends to a more general corruption, and by poisoning the streams of justice at their source, produces more extensive mischief, than under any other circumstances, it is impossible to deny. In a country, moreover, where the people have a voice in the government, the corruption of their laws must first have inhered, and become inveterate in their manners. Such corruption is therefore not so much an *instance* as a *monument* of

national degeneracy; but it by no means follows that this is the only just idea of national sins. National sins are the sins of the nation. The system which teaches us to consider a people as speaking and acting merely through the medium of its prince or legislature, however useful or necessary to adjust the intercourse of nations with each other, is too technical, too artificial, too much of a compromise with the imperfection essential to human affairs, to enter into the views, or regulate the conduct of the Supreme Being. He sees things as they are; and as the greater part of the crimes committed in every country are perpetrated by its inhabitants in their individual character, it is these, though not to the exclusion of others, which chiefly provoke the divine judgements.

To consider national sins as merely comprehending the vices of rulers, or the iniquities tolerated by law, is to place the duties of such a season as this in a very *invidious* and a very *inadequate* light. It is to render them invidious; for upon this principle our chief business on such occasions is, to single out for attack those whom we are commanded to obey, to descant on public abuses, and to hold up to detestation and abhorrence the supposed delinquencies of the government under which we are placed. How far such a conduct tends to promote that broken and contrite heart which is heaven's best sacrifice, it requires no great sagacity to discover.

It is, moreover, to exhibit a most *inadequate* view of the duties of this season. It confines humiliation and confession to a mere scantling of the sins which pollute a nation. Under the worst governments (to say nothing of our own) the chief perversions of right are not found in courts of justice, nor the chief outrages on virtue in the laws, nor the greatest number of atrocities in the public administration. Civil government, the great antidote which the wisdom of man has applied to the crimes and disorders that spring up in society, can scarcely ever become, in no free country at least, is it possible for it to become *itself* the chief crime and disorder. It may, on occasion, prescribe *particular things* that are wrong, and sometimes reward where it ought to punish; but unless it bent its force, for the most part, to the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice; unless the general spirit of its laws were in unison with the dictates of conscience, it would soon fall to pieces from intestine weakness and disorder.

A last appeal, in all moral questions, lies to the Scriptures, where you will invariably find the prophets, in their boldest paintings of national vice, in their severest denunciations of divine anger, are so far from confining their representation to the conduct of rulers, that they are seldom mentioned in comparison of the people. Their attention is chiefly occupied in depicting the cor-

ruptions which prevailed in the several classes of the community, among which the crimes of princes and judges are most severely reprehended, not as representatives, but as parts of the whole. They knew nothing of that refinement, by which a people are at liberty to transfer their vices to their rulers. To confirm this remark, by adducing all the instances the prophecies afford, would be to quote a great part of the Old Testament; it is sufficient to refer you to the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel, where, after portraying the manners of the age with the peculiar vehemence of style which distinguished that holy prophet, he closes his description with these remarkable words; *And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.*

Let us not deceive ourselves with vain words. The just displeasure of God, as it will by no means spare the great when they are criminal and impenitent, so neither is it excited by their wickedness alone. It is a fire supplied from innumerable sources, to which every crime contributes its quota, and which every portion of guilt, wherever it is found, causes to burn with augmented violence.

Having thus endeavored to expose those grounds of confidence which appear replete with danger, it will not be necessary to dwell long on the remaining part of the subject. To be aware of the several wrong paths into which we are liable to be misled, is the principal requisite to the finding out that which is alone the true and right one.

The first duty to which our situation summons us, is a devout acknowledgement of the hand of God. To this whatever be the instruments employed, religion instructs us ultimately to refer national calamities as well as national blessings. *That the Lord reigns*, is one of those truths which lie at the very basis of piety; nor is there any more consoling. It fills the heart, under a right impression of it, with a cheerful hope, and unruffled tranquillity amidst the changes and trials of life, which we shall look for in vain from any other quarter. It is this chiefly which formed and distinguished the character of those who are emphatically said to have walked with God. Important as this disposition is under all circumstances, it is what more especially suits the present crisis, and which the events we have witnessed are so eminently calculated to impress. The Psalmist accounts for the wicked's refusing to seek after God, from their having no changes; and certainly an uninterrupted series of prosperity, is not favorable to piety. But if *we* forget God, we cannot plead even this slight extenuation; for the times that are *passing over us*, in the solemn phrase of Scripture, are eventful beyond all former example or conception. The fearful catastrophies, the strange vicissitudes, the sudden rev-

olutions of fortune, which, thinly scattered heretofore over a long tract of ages, poets and historians have collected, and exhibited to the terror and the commiseration of mankind, have crowded upon us with so strange rapidity, and thickened so fast, that they have become perfectly familiar, and are almost numbered among ordinary events. Astonishment has exhausted itself; and whatever occurs, we cease to be surprised. In short, every thing around us, in the course of a few years, is so changed, that did not the permanence and stability of the material, form a contrast to the fluctuations of the moral and political world, we might be tempted to suppose we had been removed to another state, or that all those things that have happened, were but the illusions of fancy and the visions of the night. How consoling, at such a season, to look up to that Being, who is a very present help in trouble, the dwelling place of all generations; who changes all things, and is himself unchanged! And independent of its impiety, how cruel is that philosophy which, under pretence of superior illumination, by depriving us of this resource, would leave us exposed to the tossings of a tempestuous ocean, without compass, without solace, and without hope!

But besides this acknowledgement of the general administration of the Deity, it behoves us to feel and confess, in national calamities, the tokens of his displeasure. The evils which overtake nations are the just judgements of the Almighty. I am perfectly aware of the disadvantages under which we labor, when we insist on this topic, from its being so trite and familiar. Instead of troubling you with a general, and I fear, unavailing descant on the manners of the age, I shall therefore content myself with calling your attention to a very few of what appear to me the most alarming symptoms of national degeneracy. Here we shall not insist so much on the progress of infidelity (though much to be deplored) as on an evil to which, if we are not greatly mistaken, that progress is chiefly to be ascribed; I mean a gradual departure from the peculiar truths, maxims, and spirit of Christianity. Christianity, issuing perfect and entire from the hands of its author, will admit of no mutilations nor improvement; it stands most secure on its own basis; and without being indebted to foreign aids, supports itself best by its own internal vigor. When under the pretence of simplifying it, we attempt to force it into a closer alliance with the most approved systems of philosophy, we are sure to contract its bounds, and to diminish its force and authority over the consciences of men. It is dogmatic; not capable of being advanced with the progress of science, but fixed and immutable. We may not be able to perceive the use or necessity of some of its discoveries, but they are not on this account the less binding

on our faith ; just as there are many parts of nature,* whose purposes we are at a loss to explore, of which, if any person were bold enough to arraign the propriety, it would be sufficient to reply that God made them. They are both equally the works of God ; and both equally partake of the mysteriousness of their author. This *integrity* of the Christian faith has been insensibly impaired ; and the simplicity of mind with which it should be embraced, gradually diminished. While the outworks of the sanctuary have been defended with the utmost ability, its interior has been too much neglected, and the fire upon the altar suffered to languish and decay. The truths and mysteries which distinguish the Christian from all other religions, have been little attended to by some, totally denied by others ; and while infinite efforts have been made by the utmost subtlety of argumentation, to establish the truth and authenticity of Revelation, few have been exerted in comparison, to shew what it really contains. The consequence has been such as might be expected—an increase of profaneness, immorality, and irreligion.

The traces of piety have been wearing out more and more, from our conversation, from our manners, from our popular publications, from the current literature of the age. In proportion as the maxims and spirit of Christianity have declined, infidelity has prevailed in their room ; for infidelity is, in reality, nothing more than a noxious spawn (pardon the metaphor) bred in the stagnant marshes of Christianity.

A lax theology is the natural parent of a lax morality. The peculiar motives, accordingly, by which the inspired writers enforce their moral lessons, the love of God and the Redeemer, concern for the honor of religion, and gratitude for the inestimable benefits of the Christian redemption, have no place in the fashionable systems of moral instruction.† The motives almost exclusively urged are such as take their rise from the present state, founded on reputa-

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* "We ought not," says the great Bacon, "to attempt to draw down or submit the mysteries of God to our reason, but on the contrary, to raise and advance our reason to the divine truth. In this part of knowledge, touching divine philosophy, I am so far from noting any deficiency, that I rather note an excess ; whereto I have digressed, because of the extreme prejudice, which both religion and philosophy have received from being *commixed together*, as that which undoubtedly will make an heretical religion and a fabulous philosophy."

This observation appears to me to deserve the most profound meditation ; and lest my remarks on this subject should appear presumptuous from so inconsiderable a person, I thought it requisite to fortify myself by so great an authority.

† If the reader wishes for a further statement and illustration of these melancholy facts, he may find it in Mr. Wilberforce's celebrated book on religion, a work which has, perhaps, done more than any other to rouse the insensibility, and augment the piety of the age.

tion, on honor, on health, or on the tendency of the things recommended to promote, under some form or other, the acquisition of worldly advantages. Thus even morality itself, by dissociating it from religion, is made to cherish the love of the world, and to bar the heart more effectually against the approaches of piety.

Here I cannot forbear remarking a great change which has taken place in the whole manner of reasoning on the topics of morality and religion, from what prevailed in the last century, and as far as my information extends, in any preceding age. This, which is an age of revolutions, has also produced a strange revolution in the method of viewing these subjects, the most important by far, that can engage the attention of man. The simplicity of our ancestors, nourished by the sincere milk of the word, rather than by the tenets of a disputatious philosophy, were content to let morality remain on the firm basis of the dictates of conscience and the will of God. They considered virtue as an *ultimate* thing, and as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was any thing, to which it stood merely in the relation of a *means*, or that within the narrow confines of this momentary state, any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*. It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion which professes to render us superior to the world, is in reality nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals or of society. In their view, it had a nobler scope and destination; it looked forward to eternity; and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was a union with its author, in the immortal fruition of God. They arranged these things in the following order; religion, comprehending the love, fear, and service of the author of our being, they placed first: social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the more physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both. Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted; the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere handmaid of social morality; social morality into an instrument of advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all. Nor have we deviated less from the example of antiquity than from that of our pious forefathers. The philosophers of antiquity in the absence of superior light, consulted with reverence the permanent principles of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the best feelings of the heart, which they employed all the powers of reason and eloquence to unfold, to adorn, to enforce; and thereby formed a luminous commentary *on the law written on the heart*. The virtue which they inculcated, grew out of the stock of human nature; it was a warm and living virtue.

It was the moral man, possessing in every limb and feature, in all its figure and movements, the harmony, dignity, and variety, which belong to the human form; it was an effort of unassisted nature to restore that image of God, which sin had mutilated and defaced. Imperfect, as might be expected, their morality was often erroneous, but in its great outlines it had all the stability of the human constitution, and its fundamental principles were coeval and co-existent with human nature. There could be nothing fluctuating and arbitrary in its more weighty decisions, since it appealed every moment to *the man within the breast;* it pretends to nothing more, than to give voice and articulation to the inward sentiments of the heart, and conscience echoed to its oracles. This, wrought into different systems, and under various modes of illustration, was the general form which morality exhibited, from the creation of the world till our time. In this state Revelation found it; and, correcting what was erroneous, supplying what was defective, and confirming what was right by its peculiar sanctions, superadded a number of supernatural truths and holy mysteries. How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply, from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new, must be fundamentally false; how is it, that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a path which no eye had explored, no foot had trod, and have undertaken, after the lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a ledger-book of profit and of loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals, we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation. All the elements and sentiments which entered into the essence of virtue before, are melted down, and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation, and determined by expediency. In executing this plan, the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing, without exception, is made an affair of calculation; under which are comprehended, not merely the duties we owe to our fellow creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance, until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in

what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here, nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart. All is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to love God with all our heart, and all our strength, the first and great commandment, the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

Thus, by a strange inversion, the *indirect influence* of Christianity, in promoting the temporal good of mankind, is mistaken for its *principal end;* the skirts of her robe are confounded with her body, and the *power of the world to come*, instead of raising our thoughts and contemplations from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator, are made solely subservient to the advancement of secular interests and passions. How these sentiments accord with the dictates of inspiration, the most unlettered Christian may easily decide. *Love not the world*, said the disciple who leaned on the breast of his Lord, *neither the things that are in the world, ; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Such was the idea entertained by an inspired Apostle of Christian virtue. Let us now turn to the modern philosopher. Virtue, he will inform us, (including the whole sum of our duties) is merely an expedient for promoting the interests and advantages of the present world, of that very world, that is, which, in the eyes of John, was passing away, and whose value he so solemnly depreciates. What admirable consistency! what elevated theology! If we can suppose this holy Apostle acquainted with what passes on earth, what satisfaction it must afford his glorified spirit, to find his sentiments so well understood, and so faithfully interpreted.

In former times it was supposed, one of the most effectual means of improvement in virtue was, the moral culture of the heart: to keep it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life, was thought an advice deserving the most serious attention. To examine frequently the state of the conscience, and to check the first risings of disorder there, was judged to be of the last importance.

It is easy to see how this moral discipline must fare under the doctrine of expediency, a doctrine which teaches man to be looking continually abroad; a doctrine which not only justifies, but enjoins, a distrust of the suggestions of the inward monitor; which will not permit the best feelings of the heart, its clearest dictates, its finest emotions, to have the smallest influence over the conduct;

and instead of yielding any thing to their direction, cites them at its bar.

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expedience is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact, it *has* produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gaiety of high life, and the low profligacy which falls under the lash of the law; a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher; maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments, as well as destroyed their authority, distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of; the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions, is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment* or *feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society; it is what it *produces*, not what *it is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape* and *appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause; but must maintain a sacred neutrality, till expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time, they are equally *candidates*, we repeat it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to it, providing the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt, which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this system, as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand, in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a quick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric

* The unholy speculations of Godwin were founded entirely on this basis.

of society tottered to its base; the earth shook under their feet, the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amidst the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appalls the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculation. Instead of revering the judgements, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency,) to desolate his works, and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims.

But it is time to conclude this discussion, which has, perhaps, already fatigued by its length. I cannot help expressing my apprehension, that this desecration of virtue, this incessant domination of physical over moral ideas, of ideas of expedience over those of right, having already dethroned religion, and displaced virtue from her ancient basis, will, if it is suffered to proceed, ere long shake the foundation of states, and endanger the existence of the civilized world. Should it ever become popular; should it ever descend from speculation into common life, and become the practical morality of the age, we may apply to such a period the awful words of Balaam; *Who shall live when God doth this?* No imagination can portray, no mind can grasp its horrors; nor when the angel in the Apocalypse, to whom the keys are entrusted, shall be commissioned to open the bottomless pit, will it send forth a thicker cloud of pestilential vapor. If the apparent simplicity of this system be alleged in its favor, I would say, it is the simplicity of meanness; it is a simplicity which is its shame; a day-light which reveals its beggary. If an air of obscurity, on the contrary, is objected against that of better times, let it be remembered that every science has its *ultimate questions*, boundaries which cannot be passed, and that if these occur earlier in morals than in other inquiries, it is the natural result of the immensity of the subject, which, touching human nature in every point, surrounding it on all sides, renders it difficult, or rather impossible, to trace it in all its relations, and view it in all its extent. Meanwhile, the shades which envelope, and will, perhaps, always envelope it in some measure, are not without their use, since they teach the two most important lessons we can learn—the vanity of our reason, and the grandeur of our destiny. It is not improbable some may be offended at the warmth and freedom which accompany these remarks: my apology, however, rests on the infinite importance of the subject, my extreme solicitude to impress what appear to me right sentiments respecting it, together with the consideration, that the confidence which ill becomes the innovators of yesterday, however able, may be pardoned in the defen-

ders, however weak, of a system which has stood the test, and sustained the virtue of two thousand years.* Let us return, then, to the safe and sober paths of our ancestors; adhering, in all moral questions, to the dictates of conscience, regulated and informed by the divine word; happy to enjoy, instead of sparks of our own kindling, the benefit of those luminaries which, placed in the moral firmament by a parent hand, have guided the church from

* The system which founds morality on utility, an utility, let it be *always* remembered, confined to the purposes of the present world, issued with ill omen from the school of infidelity. It was first broached, I believe, certainly first brought into general notice, by Mr. Hume, in his Treatise on Morals, which he himself pronounced *incomparably the best* he ever wrote. It was incomparably the best for his purpose; nor is it easy to imagine a mind so acute as his did not see the effect it would have in setting morality and religion afloat; and substituting for the stability of principle the looseness of speculation and opinion. It has since been rendered popular by a succession of eminent writers; by one especially (I doubt not with intentions very foreign from those of Mr. Hume) whose great services to religion in other respects, together with my high reverence for his talents, prevent me from naming. This venerable author, it is probable, little suspected to what lengths the principle would be carried, or to what purposes it would be applied in other hands. Had he foreseen this, I cannot but imagine he would have spared this part of his acute speculations.

We have happily, preserved to us two complete Treatises on Morals, in which the authors professed to give us a complete view of our duties; the one composed by the greatest master of reason, the other of eloquence, the world ever saw. The first of these has distinguished, classified and arranged the elements of *social morality*, which is all he could reach in the absence of Revelation, with that acuteness, subtilty, and precision, for which he was so eminently distinguished. Whoever attentively peruses his Treatise, on the Nicomachian Morals I mean, will find a perpetual reference to the inward sentiments of the breast. He builds every thing on the human constitution. He all along takes it for granted, that there is a proud impress on the mind, to which, without looking abroad, we may safely appeal. In a word, Aristotle never lost the moralist in the accountant. He has been styled the Interpreter of Nature, and has certainly shown himself a most able commentator on the *law written on the heart*. For Cicero, in all his philosophical works, as well as in his offices, where he treats more directly on these subjects, he shows the most extreme solicitude, as though he had a prophetic glance of what was to happen, to keep the moral and natural world apart, to assert the supremacy of virtue, and to recognize those sentiments and vestiges from which he educes, with the utmost elevation, the *contempt of human things*. How humiliating the consideration! that with such superior advantages, our moral systems should be infinitely surpassed in warmth and grandeur by those of Pagan times, and that the most jejune and comfortless that ever entered the mind of man, and the most abhorrent from the spirit of religion, should have ever become popular in a Christian country. This departure from the precedents of antiquity, will not, by those that are capable of forming a judgement, be easily imputed to the superiority of our talents; it is rather the result of that tendency to *degradation* which has long marked our progress. Along with the simplicity of faith and a reverence for the Scriptures, our respect for the dignity (rightly understood) of human nature, and tenderness for its best interests, have been gradually impaired. A fearlessness of consequences, a hardihood of mind, a disposition to sacrifice every thing to originality, or to a pretended philosophical precision, have succeeded in their place. This, in my humble opinion, has been the great bane of modern speculation, and has rendered so much of it wild, ferocious, and destructive.

the beginning, in her mysterious sojourn to eternity. *Stand in the way, and see, and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

Instead of demolishing the temple of Christian virtue, from a presumptuous curiosity to inspect its foundations, let us rejoice they are laid too deep for our scrutiny. Let us *worship* in it; and along with the *nations of them that are saved, walk in its light.*

Having endeavored to point out the source of our degeneracy, in a departure from the doctrines and spirit of Christianity, I hasten to dispatch the remainder of this discourse; nor will it detain you long.

Whoever has paid attention to the manners of the day, must have perceived a remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, in which we have receded more and more from the spirit of Christianity. Of this, the term employed to denote a lofty sentiment of personal superiority supplies an obvious instance. In the current language of the times, *pride* is scarcely ever used but in a favorable sense. It will, perhaps, be thought the mere change of a term is of little consequence; but be it remembered, that any remarkable innovation in the use of moral terms, betrays a proportionable change in the ideas and feelings they are intended to denote. As pride has been transferred from the list of vices to that of virtues, so humility, as a natural consequence, has been excluded, and is rarely suffered to enter into the praise of a character we wish to commend, although it was the leading feature in that of the Saviour of the world, and is still the leading characteristic of his religion. There is no vice, on the contrary, against which the divine denunciations are so frequent as pride. Our conduct, in this instance, is certainly rather extraordinary, both in what we have embraced, and in what we have rejected; and it will surely be confessed, we are somewhat unfortunate, in having selected that vice as the particular object of approbation, which God had already selected as the especial mark at which he aims the thunderbolts of his vengeance.

Another symptom of degeneracy appears in the growing disregard to the external duties of religion; the duties more especially of the Lord's day and of public worship. It is supposed by such as have the best means of information, that throughout the kingdom, the number who regularly assemble for worship is far inferior to those who neglect it; that in our great towns and cities they are not one-fourth of the people, and in the metropolis a much smaller proportion. It is easy to foresee how the leisure afforded by the Christian Sabbath will be employed by those who utterly forget the design of its institution. It is somewhat remarkable, that here the extremes meet, and that the public duties of

religion are most slighted by the highest and the lowest classes of society; by the former, I fear, from indolence and pride; by the latter, from ignorance and profligacy.

Too many of the first description, when they do attend, it is in such a manner as makes it evident they esteem it merely an act of condescension, to which they submit as an example to their inferiors, who, penetrating the design, and imitating their indifference rather than their devotion, are disgusted with a religion which they perceive has no hold on their superiors, and is only imposed upon themselves as a badge of inferiority and a muzzle of restraint. Could the rich and noble be prevailed upon for a moment to attend to the instructions of their Lord, instead of making their elevated rank a reason for neglecting these duties, they would learn that there are none to whom they are so necessary, since there are none whose situation is so perilous, whose responsibility is so great, and whose salvation is so arduous.

Here fidelity compels me to advert to a circumstance, which I mention with sincere reluctance, because it implies something like a censure on the conduct of those whom it is our duty to respect. You are, probably, aware I mean the assigning part of the Sunday to military exercises. When we consider how important an institution the Christian Sabbath is, how essential to the maintenance of public worship, which is itself essential to religion, and what a barrier it opposes to the impiety and immorality of the age, is it not to be lamented that it should ever have been, in the smallest degree, infringed by legislative authority? The rest of the Sabbath had been already too much violated, its duties too much neglected; but this is the first instance of the violation of it being publicly recommended and enjoined;* at a time too, when we are engaged with an enemy, whose very name conveys a warning against impiety. Our places of worship have been thinned by the absence of those who have been employed in military evolutions, and of a still greater number of gazers, whom such spectacles attract. Nor is the time lost from religious duties so much to be considered, as that tumult and hurry of mind, utterly incompatible with devotion, which are inseparable from military ideas and preparations. It could surely never be the intention of the legislature, though such has been the effect, to detach the defenders of their country from the worshippers of God; nor is it to be supposed they adverted to the influence which a precedent of such high authority must have, in divesting the Sabbath of its sanctity in the eyes of the people, and of establishing the fatal epoch, whence it was no longer to be revered as the ordinance of

* The book of Sports in Charles the Second's reign, is not an exception, as this, though sufficiently censurable, was not considered as a violation of the *rest* of the Sabbath.

heaven. They had, we will believe, no such intention; but the innocence of the intention abates nothing of the mischief of the precedent.

As it is foreign from my purpose to make a complete enumeration of national sins, which would not only be a most painful task in itself, but quite incompatible with the limits of this discourse, I shall content myself with the mention of one more proof of the degeneracy of our manners. This proof is found in that almost universal profaneness which taints our daily intercourse, and which has risen to such a height as to have become a melancholy characteristic of our country. In no nation under heaven, probably, has the profanation of sacred terms been so prevalent as in this Christian land. The name even of the Supreme Being himself, and the words he has employed to denounce the punishment of the impenitent, are rarely mentioned but in anger or in sport; so that were a stranger to our history to witness the style of our conversation, he would naturally infer we considered religion as a detected imposture, and that nothing more remained than, in return for the fears it had inspired, to treat it with the insult and derision due to a fallen tyrant. To view this practice in the most favorable light, it indicates, as has been observed by a great writer,* "a mind over which religious considerations have little influence." It also sufficiently accounts for that propensity to ridicule piety, which is one of our national peculiarities. It would be unfair to suppose, that at the best times there was ever more piety on the continent than here; be this as it may, it never appears to have exposed its possessor to contempt; nor was the sublime devotion of Fenelon and of Pascal ever considered as forming a shade to their genius; the reverence for religion had not been worn away by the familiar abuse of its peculiar terms.

It will be expected something should be said on the slave trade. Its enormity no words can express. But here we must feel a mixture of satisfaction and regret; of satisfaction, at finding it has excited such general indignation among the people; of regret, that notwithstanding this, it should still be continued. By the most earnest and unanimous remonstrances, addressed to those who alone could abolish it, the people have purged themselves from this contamination. Their application was unsuccessful. The guilt and turpitude of this traffic now rests on the heads of those who sanction, and of those who conduct it. From some recent events in the western colonies, it seems not unlikely the Deity is about to take this affair into his own hands, and to accomplish by his interposition what has been denied to the prayer of the nation.

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* Dr. Paley.

It is far from being a pleasing employ; it is painful, it is distressing to dwell on such topics; but it is necessary. Our disease has gone too far to admit of palliatives; our wounds are too deep to be healed, till they are searched and probed to the bottom. The only safe expedient which remains to be adopted, is an immediate return to God; *to forsake every one his evil way, and the violence that is in his hands, and cry mightily to Him; and who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger from us.* At the same time let it be remembered, that repentance is a personal concern. Instead of losing ourselves in a crowd, and resting in general confessions, we ought each one to examine his own ways and turn from his own iniquity. We shall not fail, if we have a spark of piety, to lament the prevalence of sin around us, but we can repent only of our own; and however in the present mixed and imperfect state, we may share in the judgements and calamities which other men's sins draw down, it is those we commit ourselves which alone can do us ultimate injury. Our continuance here is but for a short time, after which, as many as are *purified and made white,* will remove into another world, be placed under a higher economy, and be put in possession of *a kingdom that cannot be moved.* We need be under no apprehension, lest the cherishing the sentiments we have recommended should lead to despondency. We have an High Priest, *who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.* In the midst of the deepest humiliation, we are invited to look up to him, with a humble reliance on the efficacy of his blood, which cleanses from all sin, and to entrust our prayers and our duties, disordered and imperfect at best, into his hands, that he may mingle them with the incense of his intercession, and present them with acceptance before God.

As a people, the most certain means of ensuring lasting prosperity, and of enabling us to transmit, unimpaired to those who shall succeed us, the rich inheritance devolved from our ancestors, will be a speedy return to the spirit and practice of the Gospel. We shall ill consult the true interests of Revelation by disguising its peculiarities, in hope of conciliating the approbation of infidels, and of adapting it more to their taste—a mistaken and dangerous policy, by which we run imminent risk of catching their contagion, without imparting the benefit of its truths. Let us not for a moment blench from its mysteries; they are *mysteries of godliness;* and however much they may surpass human reason, bear the distinct impress of a divine hand. We rejoice that they *are* mysterious, so far from being ashamed of them on that account; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their *unsearchable riches,* and

undefinable grandeur. In fine, let us draw our religion and morality entirely from the word of God, without seeking any deeper foundation for our duties than the *will* of the Supreme Being, an implicit and perfect acquiescence in which is the *highest virtue* a creature can attain.

Amidst many unfavorable symptoms of the state of morals amongst us, there are others of a contrary nature. We may hope infidelity has nearly run its length. In truth, its sophistry, in the eyes of men of sense, has been much discredited by the absurdity of its tenets; and if any have been in danger of being seduced by the talents of its advocates, they have commonly found a sufficient antidote in their lives. We have learned to prize Revelation more than ever, since we have seen the ludicrous mistakes, as well as serious disasters, of those mystics of impiety, who choose rather to walk by an internal light, than enjoy the benefit of its illumination. They have edified us much, without intending it; they have had the effect which critics assign as the purposes of the tragic muse,* that of purifying the heart by pity and terror. Their zeal has excited an equal degree of ardor in a better cause, and their efforts to extirpate religion have been opposed by contrary efforts, to diffuse its influence, at home and abroad, to a degree unexampled in modern times. A growing unanimity has prevailed among the good in different parties, who finding a centre of union in the great truths of Revelation, and in a solicitude for its interests, are willing to merge their smaller differences in a common cause. The number of the sincerely pious, we trust, is increasing among us, whose zeal, so far from suffering abatement from the confidence of infidelity, has glowed with a purer and more steady flame than ever. These are pleasing indications that the presence of the *Holy One of Israel* is still in the midst of us.

How it may please the Ruler of the universe to dispose the destinies of the two most powerful nations of the earth, which are at this moment laid in the balance, it is impossible for us with certainty to say. But when we consider how many of his sincere worshippers, how large a portion of his church, together with how rich a fund of wisdom, of talents, and of all those elements of social order which he must approve, are enclosed within the limits of this highly favored land, we cannot believe he intends to give it up a prey to its enemies. Our insular situation is favorable, our resources are prodigious, and the preparations which have long been making, apparently every way equal to the danger of the crisis; but still we would place our ultimate reliance on Him who

* The allusion to the TRAGIC MUSE should have been marked as a quotation, though the author knows not with certainty to whom to ascribe it. He believes it fell from the elegant pen of an illustrious female, Mrs. MOORE.

abases the proud, and exalts the lowly. It would be presumption to imagine it in my power to add any thing to those considerations, which have already produced such a general movement in defence of our liberties. The cause speaks for itself; it excites feelings which words are ill able to express; involving every object and motive which can engage the solicitude, affect the interests, or influence the heart of man. After a series of provocations and injuries, reciprocally sustained and retaliated, the dispute betwixt us and our enemies is brought to a short issue; it is no longer which of the two nations shall have the ascendant, but which shall continue a nation; it is a struggle for existence, not for empire. It must surely be regarded as a happy circumstance, that the contest did not take this shape at an earlier period, while many were deceived by certain specious pretences of liberty into a favorable opinion of our enemies' designs. The popular delusion is past; the most unexampled prodigies of guilt have dispelled it; and, after a series of rapine and cruelty, have torn from every heart the last fibres of mistaken partiality. The crimes of those with whom we have to contend, are legible in every part of Europe. There is scarcely a man to be found, who is not most perfectly acquainted with the meaning of that freedom they profess to bestow; that it is a freedom from the dominion of laws, to pass under the yoke of slavery, and from the fear of God to plunge into crimes and impiety; an impious barter of all that is good for all that is ill, through the utmost range and limits of moral destiny. Nor is it less easy to develope the character of our principal enemy. A man bred in the school of ferocity, amidst the din of arms and the tumult of camps; his element, war and confusion; who has changed his religion with his uniform, and has not spared the assassination of his own troops; it is easy to foresee what treatment such a man will give to his enemies, should they fall into his power; to those enemies especially, who, saved from the shipwreck of nations, are preserving, as in an ark, the precious remains of civilization and order, and whom, after destroying the liberties of every other country, he envies the melancholy distinction of being the only people he has not enslaved. Engaged with such an enemy, no weak hopes of moderation or clemency can tempt us for a moment to relax in our resistance to his power, and the only alternative which remains is, to conquer or to die.

Hence that unexampled unanimity which distinguishes the present season. In other wars we have been a divided people; the effect of our external operations has been, in some measure, weakened by intestine dissension. When peace has returned, the breach has widened; while parties have been formed on the merits of particular men, or of particular measures. These have all

disappeared; we have buried our mutual animosities in a regard to the common safety. The sentiment of self preservation, the first law which nature has impressed, has absorbed every other feeling; and the fire of liberty has melted down the discordant sentiments and minds of the British Empire into one mass, and propelled them in the same direction. Partial interests and feelings are suspended, the spirits of the body are collected at the heart, and we are awaiting with anxiety, but without dismay, the discharge of that mighty tempest which hangs upon the skirts of the horizon, and to which the eyes of Europe, and of the world, are turned in silent and awful expectation. While we feel solicitude, let us not betray dejection; nor let us be alarmed at the past successes of our enemy, which are more dangerous to himself than to us, since they have raised him from obscurity to an elevation which has made him giddy, and tempted him to suppose every thing within his power. The intoxication of his success is the omen of his fall. What though he has carried the flames of war throughout Europe, and *gathered as a nest the riches of the nations, while none peeped, nor muttered, nor moved the wing;* he has yet to try his fortune in another field; he has yet to contend on a soil filled with the monuments of freedom, enriched with the blood of its defenders; with a people who, animated with one soul, and inflamed with one zeal, for their laws and for their prince, are armed in defence of all they hold dear or venerable; their wives, their parents, their children, the sanctuary of God, and the sepulchre of their fathers. We will not suppose there is one who will be deterred from exerting himself in such a cause, by a pusillanimous regard to his safety, when he reflects that he has already lived too long who has survived the ruin of his country; and that he who can enjoy life after such an event, deserves not to have lived at all. It will suffice us, if our mortal existence, which is at most but a span, be co-extended with that of the nation which gave us birth. We will gladly quit the scene, with all that is noble and august, innocent and holy; and instead of wishing to survive the oppression of weakness, the violation of beauty, and the extinction of every thing on which the heart can repose, welcome the shades which will hide from our view such horrors.

From the most fixed principles of human nature, as well as from the examples of all history, we may be certain, the conquest of this country, should it be permitted to take place, will not terminate in any ordinary catastrophe, in any much less calamitous than utter extermination. Our present elevation will be the exact measure of our future depression, as it will measure the fears and jealousies of those who subdue us. While the smallest vestige remains of our former greatness, while any trace or memorial ex-

ists of our having been once a flourishing and independent empire, while the nation breathes, they will be afraid of its recovering its strength, and never think themselves secure of their conquest till our navy is consumed, our wealth dissipated, our commerce extinguished, every liberal institution abolished, our nobles extirpated; whatever in rank, character, and talents, gives distinction in society, called out and destroyed, and the refuse which remains, swept together into a putrifying heap by the besom of destruction. The enemy will not need to proclaim his triumph; it will be felt in the more expressive silence of extended desolation.

Recollect for a moment his invasion of Egypt, a country which had never given him the slightest provocation; a country so remote from the theatre of his crimes, that it probably did not know there was such a man in existence; (happy ignorance, could it have lasted!) but while he was looking around him, like a vulture, perched on an eminence, for objects on which he might gratify his insatiable thirst for rapine, he no sooner beheld the defenceless condition of that unhappy country, than he darted upon it in a moment. In vain did it struggle, flap its wings, and rend the air with its shrieks; the cruel enemy, deaf to its cries, had infixed his talons, and was busy in sucking its blood, when the interference of a superior power forced him to relinquish his prey, and betake himself to flight. Will that vulture, think you, ever forget his disappointment on that occasion, or the numerous wounds, blows, and concussions, he received in a ten years' struggle? It is impossible. It were folly to expect it. He meditates, no doubt, the deepest revenge. He who saw nothing in the simple manners and bland liberties of the Swiss to engage his forbearance; nothing in proclaiming himself a Mahometan to revolt his conscience; nothing in the condition of defenceless prisoners to excite his pity, nor in that of the companions of his warfare, sick and wounded in a foreign land, to prevent him from dispatching them by poison, will treat in a manner worthy of the impiety and inhumanity of his character, a nation which he naturally dislikes as being free, dreads as the rivals of his power, and abhors as the authors of his disgrace.

Though these are undoubted truths, and ought to be seriously considered, yet I would rather choose to appeal to sentiments more elevated than such topics can inspire. To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with our station, to extend your views to a distant futurity, and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprises, by the success of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished; the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free

towns of Germany, has completed that catrastrophe; and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere, who are in possesssion of equal laws and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favorite abode; but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled; in the Thermopylæ of the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the federal representatives of the human race; for in you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are entrusted to your hand, and on your conduct, at this moment, depends the color and complexion of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will invest it? It remains with you, then, to decide, whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall and wrapt in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilized world. Go, then, ye defenders of your country, accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success not to lend you her aid. She will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon, will grasp the sword of the spirit; and from myriads of humble and contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success; so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, are equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in the struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; virtue will atone for the outrages of fortune, by conducting you to immortality; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead; while posterity to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period, and they will incessantly revolve them, will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favorable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands, inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready to *swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever,* they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labors, and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty;* go forth with our hosts in the day of battle. Impart, in addition to their hereditary valor, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence; pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes; inspire them with thine own; and, while led by thine hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley, and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination, chariots of fire and horses of fire. *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE LOWER CLASSES.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

HERVEY-LANE, LEICESTER,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

ADVERTISEMENT.

To attempt to disarm the severity of criticism by humiliation or entreaty, would be a hopeless task. Waving every apology, the author, therefore, has only to remark, that the motives of a writer must ever remain a secret, but the *tendency* of what he writes, is capable of being ascertained; and is in reality the only consideration in which the public are interested. The author is concerned at an unexpected coincidence in the text, betwixt this and a very excellent discourse, delivered on a similar occasion, and published by his much esteemed friend, the Rev. Francis Coxe. The coincidence was entirely accidental, and the text in each instance being employed very much in the manner of a motto, it is hoped the train of thought will be found sufficiently distinct. He cannot conclude without recommending to the public, and to the young especially, the serious perusal of the above mentioned animated and impressive discourse.

A

SERMON.

PROVERBS XIX. 2.

That the heart be without knowledge, it is not good.

THROUGHOUT every part of this book, the author is copious and even profuse in the praises of knowledge. To stimulate to the acquisition of it, and to assist in the pursuit, is the professed design with which it was penned. *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgement, and equity; to give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.*

Though it is evident from many passages, that in the encomiums to which we have referred, the author had principally in view divine knowledge, yet from other parts it is equally certain he by no means intended to exclude from these commendations, knowledge in general; and as we propose this afternoon to recommend to your attention the Sabbath-day School established in this place, a few reflections on the utility of knowledge at large, and of religious knowledge in particular, will not be deemed unseasonable.

1. Let me request your attention to a few remarks on the utility of knowledge in general. It must strike us, in the first place, that the extent to which we have the faculty of acquiring it, forms the most obvious distinction of our species. In inferior animals, it subsists in so small a degree, that we are wont to deny it to them altogether, the range of their knowledge, if it deserve the name, is so extremely limited, and their ideas so few and simple. Whatever is most exquisite in their operations, is referred to an instinct, which working within a narrow compass, though with undeviating uniformity, supplies the place, and supersedes the necessity of

reason. In inferior animals, the knowledge of the whole species is possessed by each individual of the species, while man is distinguished by numberless diversities in the scale of mental improvement. Now to be destitute in a remarkable degree of an acquisition which forms the appropriate possession of human nature, is degrading to that nature, and must proportionably disqualify it for reaching the end of its creation.

As the power of acquiring knowledge is to be ascribed to reason, so the attainment of it mightily strengthens and improves it, and thereby enables it to enrich itself with further acquisitions. Knowledge in general expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens innumerable sources of intellectual enjoyment. By means of it, we become less dependent for satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites, the gross pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. Instead of being continually solicited by the influence and irritation of sensible objects, the mind can retire within herself, and expatiate in the cool and quiet walks of contemplation. The author of nature has wisely annexed a pleasure to the exercise of our active powers, and particularly to the pursuit of truth, which if it be in some instances less intense, is far more durable than the gratifications of sense, and is on that account incomparably more valuable. Its duration, to say nothing of its other properties, renders it more valuable. It may be repeated without satiety, and pleases afresh on every reflection upon it. These are self-created satisfactions, always within our reach, not dependent upon events, not requiring a peculiar combination of circumstances to produce or maintain them, they rise from the mind itself, and inhere, so to speak, in its very substance. Let the mind but retain its proper functions, and they spring up spontaneously, unsolicited, unborrowed, and unbought. Even the difficulties and impediments which obstruct the pursuit of truth, serve, according to the economy under which we are placed, to render it more interesting. The labor of intellectual search, resembles and exceeds the tumultuous pleasures of the chase, and the consciousness of overcoming a formidable obstacle, or of lighting on some happy discovery, gives all the enjoyment of a conquest, without those corroding reflections by which the latter must be impaired. Can we doubt that Archimedes, who was so absorbed in his contemplations as not to be diverted by the sacking of his native city, and was killed in the very act of meditating a mathematical theorem, did not when he exclaimed εὑρηκα! εὑρηκα!* feel a transport as genuine as was ever experienced after the most brilliant victory?

* I have found it! I have found it!

But to return to the moral good which results from the acquisition of knowledge; it is chiefly this, that by multiplying the mental resources, it has a tendency to exalt the character, and, in some measure, to correct and subdue the taste for gross sensuality. It enables the possessor to beguile his leisure moments (and every man has such) in an innocent at least, if not in a useful manner. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the public house for that purpose. His mind can find him employment when his body is at rest; he does not lie prostrate and afloat on the current of incidents, liable to be carried whithersoever the impulse of appetite may direct. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of *mental* good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged. The calm satisfaction which books afford, puts him into a disposition to relish more exquisitely, the tranquil delight inseparable from the indulgence of conjugal and parental affection; and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and shun whatever would impair that respect. He who is inured to reflection will carry his views beyond the present hour; he will extend his prospect a little into futurity, and be disposed to make some provision for his approaching wants; whence will result an increased motive to industry, together with a care to husband his earnings, and to avoid unnecessary expense. The poor man who has gained a taste for good books, will in all likelihood become thoughtful, and when you have given the poor a habit of thinking, you have conferred on them a much greater favor than by the gift of a large sum of money, since you have put them in possession of the *principle* of all legitimate prosperity.

I am persuaded that the extreme profligacy, improvidence, and misery, which are so prevalent among the laboring classes in many countries, are chiefly to be ascribed to the want of education. In proof of this we need only cast our eyes on the condition of the Irish, compared with that of the peasantry in Scotland. Among the former you behold nothing but beggary, wretchedness, and sloth; in Scotland, on the contrary under the disadvantages of a worse climate and more unproductive soil, a degree of decency and comfort, the fruit of sobriety and industry, are conspicuous among the lower classes. And to what is this disparity in their situation to be ascribed, except to the influence of education? In Ireland, the education of the poor is miserably neglected, very few of them can read, and they grow up in a total ignorance of

what it most befits a rational creature to understand; while in Scotland the establishment of free-schools in every parish, an essential branch of the ecclesiastical constitution of the country, brings the means of instruction within the reach of the poorest, who are there inured to decency, industry, and order.

Some have objected to the instruction of the lower classes, from an apprehension that it would lift them above their sphere, make them dissatisfied with their station in life, and by impairing the habit of subordination, endanger the tranquillity of the state; an objection devoid surely of all force and validity. It is not easy to conceive in what manner instructing men in their duties can prompt them to neglect those duties, or how that enlargement of reason which enables them to comprehend the true grounds of authority and the obligation to obedience, should indispose them to obey. The admirable mechanism of society, together with that subordination of ranks which is essential to its subsistence, is surely not an elaborate imposture, which the exercise of reason will detect and expose. The objection we have stated, implies a reflection on the social order, equally impolitic, invidious, and unjust. Nothing in reality renders legitimate government so insecure as extreme ignorance in the people. It is this which yields them an easy prey to seduction, makes them the victims of prejudice and false alarms, and so ferocious withal, that their interference in a time of public commotion, is more to be dreaded than the eruption of a volcano.

The true prop of good government is opinion, the perception on the part of the subject of benefits resulting from it, a settled conviction, in other words, of its being a public good. Now nothing can produce or maintain that opinion but knowledge, since opinion is a form of knowledge. Of tyrannical and unlawful governments, indeed, the support is fear, to which ignorance is as congenial as it is abhorrent from the genius of a free people. Look at the popular insurrections and massacres in France; of what description of persons were those ruffians composed who, breaking forth like a torrent, overwhelmed the mounds of lawful authority? Who were the cannibals that sported with the mangled carcases and palpitating limbs of their murdered victims, and dragged them about with their teeth in the gardens of the Thuilleries? Were they refined and elaborated into these barbarities by the efforts of a too polished education? No: they were the very scum of the populace, destitute of all moral culture, whose atrocity was only equalled by their ignorance as might well be expected, when the one was the legitimate parent of the other. Who are the persons who, in every country, are most disposed to outrage and violence, but the most ignorant and uneducated of the

poor; to which class also chiefly belong those unhappy beings who are doomed to expiate their crimes at the fatal tree; few of whom, it has recently been ascertained, on accurate inquiry are able to read, and the greater part utterly destitute of all moral or religious principle.

Ignorance gives a sort of eternity to prejudice, and perpetuity to error. When a baleful superstition, like that of the church of Rome, has once got footing among a people in this situation, it becomes next to impossible to eradicate it; for it can only be assailed, with success, by the weapons of reason and argument, and to these weapons it is impassive. The sword of ethereal temper loses its edge, when tried on the scaly hide of this leviathan. No wonder the church of Rome is such a friend to ignorance; it is but paying the arrears of gratitude in which she is deeply indebted. How is it possible for her not to hate that light which would unveil her impostures, and detect her enormities?

If we survey the genius of Christianity, we shall find it to be just the reverse. It was ushered into the world with the injunction, *Go and teach all nations*, and every step of its progress is to be ascribed to instruction. With a condescension worthy of its Author, it offers information to the meanest and most illiterate; but extreme ignorance is not a state of mind favorable to it. The first churches were planted in cities, (and those the most celebrated and enlightened) drawn neither from the very highest nor the very lowest classes; the former too often the victims of luxury and pride, the latter sunk in extreme stupidity; but from the middle orders, where the largest portion of virtue and good sense has usually resided. In remote villages, its progress was extremely slow, owing unquestionably to that want of mental cultivation, which rendered them the last retreats of superstition; insomuch that in the fifth century, the abettors of the ancient idolatry began to be denominated *Pagani*, which properly denotes the inhabitants of the country, in distinction from those who reside in towns. At the Reformation, the progress of the reformed faith went hand in hand with the advancement of letters; it had every where the same friends and the same enemies; and next to its agreement with the Holy Scriptures, its success is chiefly to be ascribed, under God, to the art of printing, the revival of classical learning, and the illustrious patrons of science attached to its cause. In the representation of that glorious period, usually styled the Millennium, when religion shall universally prevail, it is mentioned as a conspicuous feature, that *men shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*. That period will not be distinguished from the preceding, by men's minds being more torpid and inactive, but rather by the consecration of every power to the service of the

Most High. It will be a period of remarkable illumination, during which *the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as that of seven days.* Every useful talent will be cultivated, every heart subservient to the interests of man, be improved and perfected; learning will amass her stores, and genius emit her splendor; but the former will be displayed without ostentation, and the latter shine with the softened effulgence of humility and love.

2. We have hitherto spoken of the advantages of *knowledge in general;* we proceed to notice the utility of *religious knowledge* in particular. Religion, on account of its intimate relation to a future state, is every man's proper business, and should be his chief care. Of knowledge in general, there are branches which it would be preposterous in the bulk of mankind to attempt to acquire, because they have no immediate connexion with their duties, and demand talents which nature has denied, or opportunities which Providence has withheld. But with respect to the primary truths of religion, the case is different; they are of such daily use and necessity, that they form not the materials of mental luxury, so properly as the food of the mind. In improving the character, the influence of general knowledge is often feeble, and always indirect; of religious knowledge the tendency to purify the heart is immediate, and forms its professed scope and design. *This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* To ascertain the character of the Supreme Author of all things, to know, as far as we are capable of comprehending such a subject, what is his moral disposition, what the situation we stand in towards him, and the principles by which he conducts his administration, will be allowed by every considerate person to be of the highest consequence. Compared to this, all other speculations or inquiries sink into insignificance; because every event that can befal us is, in his hands, and by his sentence, our final condition must be fixed. To regard such an inquiry with indifference, is the mark not of a noble, but of an abject mind, which, immersed in sensuality, or amused with trifles, *deems itself unworthy of eternal life.* To be so absorbed in worldly pursuits, as to neglect future prospects, is a conduct that can plead no excuse, until it is ascertained beyond all doubt or contradiction, that there is no hereafter, and that nothing remains but that we *eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.* Even in that case, to forego the hope of immortality without a sigh; to be gay and sportive on the brink of destruction, in the very moment of relinquishing prospects, on which the wisest and best in every age have delighted to dwell, is the indication of a base and degenerate spirit. If existence be a good, the eternal loss of it must be a great evil; if it be an evil,

reason suggests the propriety of inquiring why it is so, of investigating the maladies by which it is oppressed. Amidst the darkness and uncertainty which hang over our future condition, Revelation, by bringing life and immortality to light, affords the only relief. In the Bible alone we learn the real character of the Supreme Being, his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth, the moral condition of man, considered in his relation to Him, is clearly pointed out, the doom of impenitent transgressors denounced, and the method of obtaining mercy, through the interposition of a divine Mediator, plainly revealed. There are two considerations which may suffice to evince the indispensable necessity of scriptural knowledge.

I. The Scriptures contain an authentic discovery of *the way of salvation*. They are a revelation of mercy to a lost world; a reply to that most interesting inquiry, *what we must do to be saved*. The distinguishing feature of the Gospel system, is the economy of redemption, or the gracious provision the Supreme Being has thought fit to make for reconciling the world to himself, by the manifestation in human nature of his own Son. It is this which constitutes it, the *Gospel*, by way of eminence, or the glad tidings concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ, on the right reception of which, or its rejection, turns our everlasting weal or woe. It is not from the character of God as our Creator, it should be remembered, that the hope of the guilty can arise; the fullest development of his essential perfections could afford no relief in this case, and therefore natural religion, were it capable of being carried to the utmost perfection, can never supersede the necessity of revealed. To inspire confidence, an express communication from heaven is necessary: since the introduction of sin has produced a peculiarity in our situation, and a perplexity in our prospects, which nothing but an express assurance of mercy can remove.

In what manner, the blessed and only Potentate, may think fit to dispose of a race of apostates, is a question on which reason can suggest nothing satisfactory, nothing salutary; a question, in the solution of which, there being no data to proceed upon, wisdom and folly show alike, and every order of intellect is reduced to a level; for *who hath known the mind of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?* It is a secret which, had he not been pleased to unfold it, must have for ever remained in the breast of the Deity. This secret, in infinite mercy he has condescended to disclose: the silence, not that which John witnessed in the Apocalypse, of half an hour, but that of ages, is broken, the darkness is past, and we behold, in the Gospel, the astonishing spectacle of *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing to them their trespasses*, and sending forth his ambassadors to *intreat us in*

Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. To that strange insensibility with respect to the concerns of a future world, which is at once the indication and consequence of the fall, must we ascribe the languid attention, with which this communication is received, instead of producing, as it ought, transports of gratitude and joy in every breast.

This, however we may be disposed to regard it, is unquestionably the grand peculiarity of the Gospel, the exclusive boast and treasure of the Scriptures, and most emphatically *the way of salvation*, not only as it reveals the gracious intentions of God to a sinful world, but as it lays a solid foundation for the *supernatural* duties of faith and repentance. All the discoveries of the Gospel, bear a most intimate relation to the character and offices of the Saviour; from him they emanate, in him they centre; nor is any thing we learn from the Old or New Testament of saving tendency, further than as a part of the truth as it is *in Jesus*. The neglect of considering Revelation in this light, is a fruitful source of infidelity. Viewing it in no higher character than a republication of the law of nature, men are first led to doubt the importance, and next the truth of the discoveries it contains; an easy and natural transition, since the question of their importance, is so complicated with that of their truth, in the Scriptures themselves, that the most refined ingenuity cannot long keep them separate. *It gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* While we contemplate it under this its true character, we view it in its just dimensions, and feel no inclination to extenuate the force of those representations which are expressive of its pre-eminent dignity. There is nothing will be allowed to come into comparison with it, nothing we shall not be ready to sacrifice for a participation of its blessings, and the extension of its influence. The veneration we shall feel for the Bible, as the depository of *saving knowledge*, will be totally distinct, not only from what we attach to any other book, but from that admiration its other properties inspire; and the variety and antiquity of its history, the light it affords in various researches, its inimitable touches of nature, together with the sublimity and beauty so copiously poured over its pages, will be deemed subsidiary ornaments, the embellishments of the casket, which contains the *pearl of great price.*

II. Scriptural knowledge is of inestimable value on account of its supplying an infallible *rule of life.* To the most untutored mind, the information it affords on this subject, is far more full and precise than the highest efforts of reason could attain. In the best

moral precepts issuing from human wisdom, there is an incurable defect in that want of authority which robs them of their power over the conscience; they are obligatory no farther than their reason is perceived; a deduction of proofs is necessary, more or less intricate and uncertain, and even when clearest, it is still but the language of man, to man, respectable as sage advice, but wanting the force and authority of law. In a well attested revelation, it is the Judge speaking from the tribunal, the Supreme Legislator promulging and interpreting his own laws. With what force and conviction, do those Apostles and Prophets address us, whose miraculous powers attest them to be the servants of the Most High, the immediate organs of the Deity! As the morality of the Gospel is more pure and comprehensive than was ever inculcated before, so the consideration of its divine origination invests it with an energy, of which every system not expressly founded upon it, is entirely devoid. We turn at our peril from him who speaketh to us from heaven.

Of an accountable creature, duty is the concern of every moment, since he is every moment pleasing or displeasing God. It is a universal element, mingling with every action, and qualifying every disposition and pursuit. The moral quality of conduct, as it serves both to ascertain and to form the character, has consequences in a future world, so certain and infallible, that it is represented in Scripture, as a seed, no part of which is lost, for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that also shall he reap. That rectitude which the inspired writers usually denominate holiness, is the health and beauty of the soul, capable of bestowing dignity in the absence of every other accomplishment, while the want of it leaves the possessor of the richest intellectual endowments a painted sepulchre. Hence results the indispensable necessity, to every description of persons, of sound religious instruction, and of an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures as its genuine source.

It must be confessed, from melancholy experience, that a speculative acquaintance with the rules of duty, is too compatible with the violation of its dictates, and that it is possible for the convictions of conscience to be habitually overpowered by the corrupt suggestions of appetite. To see distinctly the right way, and to pursue it, are not precisely the same thing. Still, nothing in the order of means promises so much success as the diligent inculcation of revealed truth. He who is acquainted with the *terrors of the Lord*, cannot live in the neglect of God and religion with present any more than with future impunity; the path of disobedience is obstructed, if not rendered impassable, and wherever he turns his eyes he beholds the sword of divine justice stretched out to intercept his passage. Guilt will be appalled, conscience

alarmed, and the fruits of unlawful gratification embittered to his taste.

It is surely desirable to place as many obstacles as possible in the path to ruin; to take care that the image of death shall meet the offender at every turn, that he shall not be able to persist without treading upon briers and scorpions, without forcing his way through obstructions more formidable than he can expect to meet with in a contrary course. If you can enlist the nobler part of his nature under the banners of virtue, set him at war with himself, and subject him to the necessity, should he persevere, of stifling and overcoming whatever is most characteristic of a reasonable creature, you have done what will probably not be unproductive of advantage. If he is at the same time reminded, by his acquaintance with the word of God, of a better state of mind being attainable, a better destiny reserved, provided they are willing and obedient, for the children of men, there is room to hope that *wearied*, to speak in the language of the prophet, *in the greatness of his way*, he will bethink himself of the true refuge, and implore the spirit of grace to aid his weakness, and subdue his corruptions. Sound religious instruction is a perpetual counterpoise to the force of depravity. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.*

While we insist on the absolute necessity of an acquaintance with the word of God, we are equally convinced it is but an instrument, which like every other, requires a hand to wield it, and that important as it is in the order of means, the spirit of Christ only can make it effectual, which ought therefore to be earnestly and incessantly implored for that purpose. *Open mine eyes*, saith the Psalmist, *and I shall behold wonderful things out of thy law.* We trust it will be your care who have the conduct of the School we are recommending to the patronage of this audience, to impress on these children a deep conviction of their radical corruption, and of the necessity of the agency of the Spirit, to render the knowledge they acquire, practical and experimental. *In the morning sow your seed, in the evening withhold not your hand; but remember that neither he that soweth, nor he that watereth, is any thing, it is God that giveth the increase.* Be not satisfied with making them read a lesson, or repeat a prayer. By every thing tender and solemn in religion, by a due admixture of the awful considerations drawn from the prospect of death and judgement, with others of a more pleasing nature, aim to fix serious impressions on their hearts. Aim to produce a religious concern,

carefully watch its progress, and endeavor to conduct it to a prosperous issue. Lead them to the footstool of the Saviour, teach them to rely, as guilty creatures, on his merits alone, and to commit their eternal interests entirely into his hands. Let the salvation of these children be the object, to which every word of your instructions, every exertion of your authority, is directed. Despise the profane clamor, which would deter you from attempting to render them serious, from an apprehension of its making them melancholy, not doubting for a moment, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that the path to true happiness lies through purity, humility, and devotion. Meditate the worth of souls; meditate deeply the lessons the Scriptures afford on their inconceivable value and eternal duration. While the philosopher wearies himself with endless speculations on their physical properties and nature, while the politician only contemplates the social arrangements of mankind and the shifting forms of policy, fix *your* attention on the individual importance of man, as the creature of God, and a candidate for immortality. Let it be your highest ambition to train up these children for an unchanging condition of being. Spare no pains to recover them to the image of God; render familiar to their minds, in all its extent, the various branches of that *holiness* without which *none shall see the Lord.* Inculcate the obligation, and endeavor to inspire the love of that rectitude, that eternal rectitude, which was with God before time began, was embodied in the person of his Son, and in its lower communications, will survive every sublunary change, emerge in the dissolution of all things, and be impressed, in refulgent characters, on the new heavens and the new earth, *in which dwelleth righteousness.* Pray often with them, and for them, and remind them of the inconceivable advantages attached to that exercise. Accustom them to a punctual and reverential attendance at the house of God; insist on their sanctification of the Sabbath, by such a disposal of time, as is suitable to a day of rest and devotion. Survey them with a vigilant and tender eye, checking every appearance of an evil and depraved disposition the moment it springs up, and encouraging the dawn of piety and virtue. By thus *training them up in the way they should go,* you may reasonably hope that *when old, they will not depart from it.*

We congratulate the nation, on the extent of the efforts employed, and the means set on foot, for the improvement of the lower classes, and especially the children of the poor, in moral and religious knowledge, from which we hope much good will accrue, not only to the parties concerned, but to the kingdom at large. These are the likeliest, or rather the only expedients that can be adopted, for forming a sound and virtuous populace; and if there

be any truth in the figure, by which society is compared to a pyramid, it is on them its stability chiefly depends; the elaborate ornament at the top, will be a wretched compensation for the want of solidity in the lower parts of the structure. These are not the times, in which it is safe for a nation to repose on the lap of ignorance. If there ever were a season, when public tranquillity was ensured by the absence of knowledge, that season is past. The convulsed state of the world will not permit unthinking stupidity to sleep, without being appalled by phantoms, and shaken by terrors, to which reason, which defines her objects and limits her apprehensions, by the reality of things, is a stranger. Every thing in the condition of mankind, announces the approach of some great crisis, for which nothing can prepare us but the diffusion of knowledge, probity, and the fear of the Lord. While the world is impelled, with such violence, in opposite directions; while a spirit of giddiness and revolt is shed upon the nations, and the seeds of mutation are so thickly sown, the improvement of the mass of the people will be our grand security, in the neglect of which, the politeness, the refinement, and the knowledge accumulated in the higher orders, weak and unprotected, will be exposed to imminent danger, and perish like a garland in the grasp of popular fury. *Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

ON THE DISCOURAGEMENTS AND SUPPORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED TO THE

REV. JAMES ROBERTSON,

AT

HIS ORDINATION

OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH, AT STRETTON,

WARWICKSHIRE.

PREFACE.

The following Discourse would sooner have made its appearance, but for circumstances in which the Public are too little interested, to render it necessary or proper for me to explain them; nor should I have adverted to the time of its publication, did it not seem strange that, having been preached on a public occasion, it should be committed to the press more than a twelve-month after the delivery.

With respect to the Sermon itself, the author begs leave to bespeak the indulgence of his readers for introducing sentiments with which they must be perfectly familiar, requesting them to recollect that, on practical subjects, the most common thoughts are usually the most important, and that originality is the last quality we seek for in advice. If it have any tendency to do good beyond the occasion of its delivery, by reminding my highly esteemed brethren in the ministry of the duties and obligation attached to their sacred function, the end proposed will be answered. The worthy person to whom it was addressed, gave a specimen of his liberality, in engaging me to take so leading a part in his ordination, when our difference of sentiment on the subject of Baptism was well known; a subject which has, unhappily, been a frequent occasion of alienating the minds of Christians from each other. How much is it to be lamented, that the Christian world should be so violently agitated by disputes, and divided into factions, on points, which, it is allowed, in whatever way they are decided, do not enter into the essentials of Christianity. When the time will arrive, when the disciples of Christ shall cordially join hand and heart with all who *hold the head*, and no other terms of communion be insisted upon in any church, but what are necessary to constitute a real Christian. The departure from a principle so directly resulting from the genius of Christianity, and so evidently inculcated and implied in the Sacred Scriptures, has, in my

apprehension, been productive of infinite mischief; nor is there room to anticipate the period of the universal diffusion and triumph of the Christian religion, but in consequence of its being completely renounced and abandoned.

What can be more repugnant to the beautiful idea which our Saviour gives us of his church, as *one fold under one Shepherd*, than the present aspect of Christendom, split into separate and hostile communions, frowning defiance on each other, where each erects itself upon *party principles*, and selects its respective watch-word of contention, as though the epithet of militant, when applied to the church, were designed to announce, not a state of conflict with the powers of darkness, but of irreconcilable intestine warfare and opposition. But it is necessary to quit a subject which, though painfully interesting, would necessarily lead to reflections inconsistent with the limits of this preface. It may be more to the purpose to remark, that the substance of the following discourse was delivered in London, at the anniversary of an academical institution, recently established in the neighborhood of that metropolis, for educating young men for the ministry in the Baptist denomination. The institution to which we refer, is under the immediate superintendence of the Rev. William Newman. I cannot let the present occasion pass, of earnestly and respectfully recommending this infant Seminary to the patronage of the religious public. There was a time, we are aware, when doubts were entertained, in some serious minds, of the eligibility of training young men for the ministry, by a preparatory course of study. These scruples, we believe, have long since subsided, and a conviction felt by intelligent men of all denominations, of the expedience, if not the necessity, of instructing candidates for the ministry in the principles of science and literature. Learning is no longer dreaded as the enemy of piety; nor is it supposed that the orthodoxy of a public teacher of religion derives any security from his professed ignorance on every other subject. Along with this revolution in the sentiments of a certain class of Christians, circumstances have arisen, connected with the more general diffusion of knowledge and the state of society, which render a higher degree of mental cultivation than was heretofore needed, indispensably requisite. The Baptist denomination, in common with other Christians, have not failed to advert to this urgent and increasing demand for cultivated talent in their ministers, although they have long had occasion to lament the scantiness and inadequacy of their

means of supplying it. To the Bristol Academy, the only seminary they possessed till within these few years, they feel the highest obligations, for supplying them with a succession of able and faithful pastors, who have done honor to their churches; and few things would give the patrons and founders of the seminary, for which I am pleading, more concern, than the suspicion of entertaining views unfavorable to that academy. They respect its claim of seniority; they revere the character of its excellent President; they contemplate, with the highest satisfaction, the beneficial result of its operations, conspicuous in most parts of the kingdom; but they are too well acquainted with the disinterested motives of its friends and benefactors, to suspect them of wishing to monopolize the education of ministers connected with the denomination. They feel as little jealousy of the seminary recently established in Yorkshire, which has already produced good fruits, under the culture and superintendance of the excellent Mr. Steadman. Convinced, however, of there being still occasion for an enlargement of the means of instruction, and having, by the munificence of a generous individual, been presented with a house and premises well adapted to academical purposes, they could feel no hesitation in accepting so noble a gift, or in seconding the pious and benevolent design of the founder. The institution is yet in its infancy, and subsists on a small scale. They look to the smiles of Heaven, and to the liberality of a Christian Public, and especially to the piety and opulence of the professors of religion in the metropolis, who have never been wanting in the zealous support of institutions tending to promote the glory of God and the best interest of mankind, for such an enlargement of their funds and resources, as, seconded by the efforts of its worthy tutor, shall render it a permanent and extensive blessing.

Leicester, Dec. 31, 1811.

A

DISCOURSE.

2 Corinthians, iv. 1.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.

As you have requested me to address you upon the present occasion, I am persuaded you will deem no apology necessary for the use of that freedom which the nature of the service to which you have invited me demands, combined with those sentiments of high esteem which your character will always inspire. Having, with the accustomed solemnities, been invested with the pastoral office over this church, you will permit me to remind you of the discouragements on the one hand, and the supports on the other, which you may reasonably look for in your ministerial warfare, as far as they are naturally suggested to us by the passage of Scripture selected for the basis of our present discourse.

If it is necessary for the private Christian, before he assumes a religious profession, to count the cost; to the minister it cannot be less so, that he may not be surprised by unexpected trials, nor dismayed at the encounter of difficulties for which he has made no preparation. A just estimate of the nature and magnitude is an important qualification for the proper discharge of whatever function we are called to exert. As you are neither a novice in the ministry, nor have failed to reflect deeply on the consequences of your present engagements, you will not suspect me of attempting, by the hints which may be suggested, to give you information, but merely *to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*

I. Let me request your attention to the sources of *Discouragement* connected with the office you have undertaken. They are such as arise, in part, from the nature of the office itself, which is appointed for the purpose of converting souls to God, and conducting them in the path to eternal life. To you, in common with other Christian pastors, is committed the ministry of reconciliation, the office of promulgating that system of truth which is designed to renew the world, and sanctify the church. Under the highest authority you are enjoined to use your utmost efforts *to open blind eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* The bare mention of such an employment is enough to convince us the difficulties attending it are of no ordinary magnitude, and to make us exclaim with an Apostle, *Who is sufficient for these things?*

1. The minds of men are naturally indisposed to the reception of divine truth. The truths of the gospel are not merely of a speculative nature, which need only to be stated with their proper evidence in order to ensure their success: there are in the mind latent prejudices against which they strongly militate, and which, when excited, naturally produce opposition. Mankind are disposed to think well of themselves, to view their virtues through a magnifying medium, and to cast their deficiencies and vices into the shade. Dissatisfied, as they often are, with their outward condition, they have yet little or no conviction of their spiritual wants; but with respect to these are ready to imagine, with the Laodiceans, that they *are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.* Hence, it is with extreme difficulty they are brought to acquiesce in the humiliating representations made by the oracles of God, of their native guilt and misery. They will readily confess they are not perfectly innocent or faultless: they have their imperfections as well as others, but they are far from believing that they are actually under the wrath and displeasure of the Almighty. They feel, on the whole, satisfied with themselves, and, by setting their supposed good qualities and actions against their bad ones, contrive to adjust their account in such a manner as leaves a considerable balance in their favor. On the mercy of God they feel no objection to profess their reliance; deeming it more decent, and even more safe, than to challenge his justice; but it is easy to perceive that the mercy of which they speak, is of such a nature, that they would look upon it as an absurdity to suppose it could be withheld. In short, they are the whole who need no physician.

The gospel presupposes a charge of guilt; it assumes, as an indubitable fact, the universal apostacy of our race, and its consequent liability to perish under the stroke of the divine anger; not

can you acquit yourself of the imputation of handling the word of God deceitfully, if, from false delicacy, or mistaken tenderness, you neglect the frequent inculcation of this momentous truth. You will find it, however, no easy matter to fasten the charge on the conscience; which, when it seems to be admitted, will often amount to nothing more than a vague and general acknowledgement, which leaves the heart quite unaffected. To convince effectually is, indeed, the work of a superior agent.

2. The very attempt to produce that humiliating sense of unworthiness and weakness, which is essential to a due reception of the gospel, will frequently excite disgust, should it terminate in no worse consequences. You will be reproached as the messenger of evil tidings, and suspected of taking a pleasure in overwhelming the soul with dark and melancholy forebodings. By a part of your hearers you will possibly be regarded as an unnatural character, and as having in your religion a tincture of what is savage and inhuman; in consequence of which, they who refuse to profit by your admonitions, will be apt to apply to you the language of the king of Israel, *I hate him, for he always prophecieth evil of me and not good.* Of the common apostacy, one of the most distinguishing features is a stupefaction, an insensibility in relation to whatever is of a spiritual nature, together with a levity and carelessness which it requires the utmost effort of the Christian ministry to dispel.

3. If you should be successful in awakening a salutary concern in the breasts of your hearers, and exciting them to inquire what they must do to be saved, fresh difficulties await you. The enemy will leave no artifice untried to divert it, and to wear it off, by such a succession of cares and vanities, that as much attention and address will be requisite to maintain it till it issues in a saving effect, as to produce it at first. There are many, who after appearing for a time earnestly engaged in the pursuit of salvation, have in consequence of stifling convictions, become more callous and insensible than ever, as iron is hardened in the fire. The grand scope of the Christian ministry is to bring men home to Christ; but ere they arrive thither, there are numerous by-paths, into which those who are awakened are in danger of diverting, and of finding a delusive repose, without coming as humble penitents to the foot of the cross. They are equally in danger of catching at premature consolation, and of sinking into listless despondency. *Withhold thy throat from thirst*, said the prophet Jeremiah, *and thy foot from being unshod; but thou saidst, there is no hope, for I have loved strangers, and after them I must go.* In the pursuit of eternal good, the heart is extremely inconstant and irresolute; easily prevailed on, when the peace it is in quest of is delayed, to

desist from further seeking. During the first serious impressions, the light, which unveils futurity, often shines with too feeble a ray to produce that perfect and plenary conviction which permits the mind no longer to vacillate; and the fascination of sensible objects, eclipses the powers of the world to come. Nor is there less to be apprehended from another quarter. The conscience, roused to a just sense of the danger to which the sinner is exposed by his violation of the laws of God, is apt to derive consolation from this very uneasiness; by which means it is possible that the alarm, which is chiefly valuable on account of its tendency to produce a consent to the overtures of the gospel, may ultimately lull the mind into a deceitful repose. The number we fear is not small, of those, who, though they have never experienced a saving change, are yet under no apprehensions respecting their state, merely because they can remember the time when they felt poignant convictions. Mistaking what are usually the preliminary steps to conversion, for conversion itself, they deduce from their former apprehensions an antidote against present fears; and from past prognostics of danger, an omen of their future safety. With persons of this description the flashes of a superficial joy, arising from a presumption of being already pardoned, accompanied with some slight and transient relishes of the word of God, are substituted for that new birth, and that lively trust in the Redeemer, to which the promise of salvation inseparably belongs. Such were those who received the seed into stony ground, and who having heard the word of God *anon with joy received it, but having no depth of earth it soon withered away.* Others endeavor to soothe the anguish of their minds by a punctual performance of certain religious exercises, and a partial reformation of conduct; in consequence of which they sink into mere formalists; and confounding the instruments of religion with the end, their apparent melioration of character diverts their attention from their real wants, and, by making them insensible of the extent of their malady, obstructs their cure. Instead of imploring the assistance of the great Physician, and implicitly complying with his prescriptions, they have recourse to palliatives, which assuage the anguish and the smart, without reaching the seat, or touching the core of the disorder.

Were the change, which the gospel proposes to effect, less fundamental and extensive than it is, we might the more easily flatter ourselves with being able to carry its designs into execution. Did it aim merely to polish the exterior, to tame the wildness, and prune the luxuriance of nature, without the implantation of a new principle, the undertaking would be less arduous. But its scope is much higher; it proposes not merely to reform, but to renew;

not so much to repair the moral edifice, as to build it afresh; not merely by the remonstrances of reason, and the dictates of prudence, to engage men to lay a restraint upon their vices, but, by the inspiration of truth, to become new creatures. The effects of the gospel on the heart, are compared, by the prophet, to the planting of a wilderness, where what was barrenness and desolation before, is replenished with new productions. *I will plant in the wilderness the cedar-tree, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle-tree; I will set in the desert, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box-tree together, that they may know, and consider, and understand, that the hand of the Lord hath done this.* Although the change is frequently slow, and the Spirit of God, in affecting it, may proceed by imperceptible steps, and gentle insinuations, the issue is invariably the same, nor can any representation do justice to its dignity. How great the skill requisite in those who are to be the instruments of producing it!

To arrest the attention of the careless, to subdue the pride and soften the obduracy of the human heart, so that it shall stoop to the authority of an unseen Saviour, is a task which surpasses the utmost efforts of human ability, unaided by a superior power. In attempting to realize the design of the Christian ministry, we are proposing to call the attention of men from the things which are seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal; to conduct them from a life of sense, to a life of faith; to subdue, or weaken at least, the influence of a world, which, being always present, is incessantly appealing to the senses, and soliciting the heart, in favor of a state, whose very existence is ascertained only by testimony. We call upon them to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to deny the strongest and most inveterate propensities, and to renounce the enjoyments which they have tasted and felt, for the sake of a happiness to which they have no relish. We must charge *them*, as they value their salvation, not to love the world, who have been accustomed to make it the sole object of their attachment, and to return to their allegiance to that almighty and invisible Ruler from whom they have deeply revolted. We present to them, it is true, *a feast of fat things of wine on the lees well refined;* we invite them to entertainments more ample and exquisite, than, but for the gospel, it had entered into the heart of man to conceive; but we address our invitations to minds fatally indisposed, alienated from the life of God, with little sense of the value of his favor, and no delight in his converse. The souls we address, though originally formed for these enjoyments, and utterly incapable of being happy without them, have lost, through the fall, that right taste and apprehension of things, which is requisite for the due appreciation of these blessings, and, like Ezekiel,

we prophesy to dry bones in the Valley of Vision, which will never live but under the visitation of that breath which bloweth where it listeth. This indisposition to the things of God, so radical and incurable by human power, as it has been a frequent source of discouragement to the faithful minister, so it would prove an invincible obstacle to success, did that success depend upon human agency.

II. To these difficulties, which arise from the nature of the work, abstractedly considered, must be added, those which are modified by a variety of circumstances, and which result from that diversity of temper, character, and situation, which prevails in our auditory. To the several classes of which it consists, it is necessary *rightly to divide the word of truth, and give to every one his portion of meat in due season.* The epidemic malady of our nature assumes so many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say, which we should most anxiously guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or inflaming the wounds which we ought to heal. A loose and indiscriminate manner of applying the promises and threatenings of the gospel, is ill-judged and pernicious; it is not possible to conceive a more effectual method of depriving the sword of the Spirit of its edge, than adopting that lax generality of representation, which leaves its hearer nothing to apply, presents no incentive to self examination, and, besides its utter inefficiency, disgusts by the ignorance of human nature, or the disregard to its best interests, it infallibly betrays. Without descending to such a minute specification of circumstances, as shall make our addresses personal, they ought unquestionably to be characteristic, that the conscience of the audience may feel the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The preacher who aims at doing good will endeavor, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgement, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump, will have no other effect than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and, amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will *mourn apart.* It is

thus the Christian minister should endeavor to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers on himself.

To men of different casts and complexions, it is obvious, a corresponding difference in the selection of topics, and the method of appeal, is requisite. Some are only capable of digesting the first principles of religion, on whom it is necessary often to inculcate the same lessons, with the reiteration of parental solicitude; there are others of a wider grasp of comprehension, who must be indulged with an ampler variety, and to whom views of religion less obvious, less obtrusive, and demanding a more vigorous exercise of the understanding, are peculiarly adapted. Some are accustomed to contemplate every subject in a light so cool and argumentative, that they are not easily impressed with any thing which is not presented in the garb of reasoning; nor apt, though firm believers in Revelation, to be strongly moved by naked assertions even from that quarter. There are others of a softer temperament, who are more easily won by tender strokes of pathos. Minds of an obdurate make, and which have been rendered callous by long habits of vice, must be appalled and subdued by the terrors of the Lord; while others are capable of being *drawn with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Some we must save with fear, plucking them out of the fire; on others we must have compassion, making a difference.* You will recollect, that he who spake as never man spake, mild, gentle, insinuating in his addresses to the multitude, reserved the thunder of his denunciations for sanctimonious hypocrites. In this part of our ministerial function, we shall do well to imitate St. Paul, who became all things to all men, that he might win some; combining, in his efforts for the salvation of souls, the utmost simplicity of intention with the utmost versatility of address.

May I be permitted to remark, though it seem a digression, that in the mode of conducting our public ministrations, we are, perhaps, too formal and mechanical; that, in the distribution of the matter of our sermons, we indulge too little variety, and, exposing our plan in all its parts, abate the edge of curiosity, by enabling the hearer to anticipate what we intend to advance. Why should that force which surprise gives to every emotion, derived from just and affecting sentiments, be banished from the pulpit, when it is found of such moment in every other kind of public address. I cannot but imagine the first preachers of the gospel appeared before their audience with a more free and unfettered air, than is consistent with the narrow trammels to which, in these latter ages, discourses from the pulpit are confined. The sublime emotions with which they were fraught, would have rendered them impa-

tient of such restrictions; nor could they suffer the impetuous stream of argument, expostulation, and pathos, to be weakened, by diverting it into the artificial reservoirs, prepared in the heads and particulars of a modern sermon. Method, we are aware, is an essential ingredient in every discourse designed for the instruction of mankind, but it ought never to force itself on the attention as an object apart; never appear to be an end instead of an instrument; or beget a suspicion of the sentiments being introduced for the sake of the method, not the method for the sentiments. Let the experiment be tried on some of the best specimens of ancient eloquence; let an oration of Cicero or Demosthenes be stretched upon a Procrustes' bed of this sort, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, the flame and enthusiasm which have excited admiration in all ages, will instantly evaporate; yet no one perceives a want of method in these immortal compositions, nor can any thing be conceived more remote from incoherent rhapsody.

To return to the subject: whatever the mode of address, or whatever the choice of topics, there are two qualities inseparable from religious instruction; these are *seriousness* and *affection*. In the most awful denunciations of the divine displeasure, an air of unaffected tenderness should be preserved, that, while with unsparing fidelity we declare the whole counsel of God, it may appear we are actuated by a genuine spirit of compassion. A hard and unfeeling manner of denouncing the threatenings of the word of God, is not only barbarous and inhuman, but calculated, by inspiring disgust, to rob them of all their efficacy. If the awful part of our message, which may be styled the burden of the Lord, ever fall with due weight on our hearers, it will be when it is delivered with a trembling hand and faltering lips; and we may then expect them to realize its solemn import, when they perceive that we ourselves are ready to sink under it. *Of whom I have told you before*, said St. Paul, *and now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*. What force does that affecting declaration derive from these tears! An affectionate manner insinuates itself into the heart, renders it soft and pliable, and disposes it to imbibe the sentiments and follow the impulse of the speaker. Whoever has attended to the effect of addresses from the pulpit, must have perceived how much of their impression depends upon this quality, which gives to sentiments comparatively trite, a power over the mind beyond what the most striking and original conceptions possess without it.

Near akin to this, and not inferior in importance, is the second quality we mentioned, *seriousness*. It is scarcely necessary to remark, how offensive and unnatural is every violation of it in a religious discourse, which is, however, of wider extent than is gene-

rally imagined, including not merely jesting, buffoonery, and undisguised levity of every sort, but also whatsoever in composition or manner is inconsistent with the supposition of the speaker being deeply in earnest; such as sparkling ornaments, far-fetched images, and that exuberance of flowers which seems evidently designed to gratify the fancy, rather than to touch the heart. When St. Paul recommends to Timothy, that *sound speech which cannot be condemned*, it is probable he refers as much to the propriety of the vehicle, as to the purity of the instruction. There is, permit me to remind you, a sober dignity, both of language and of sentiment, suited to the representations of religion in all its variety of topics, from which the inspired writers never depart, and which it will be our wisdom to imitate. In describing the pleasures of devotion, or the joys of heaven, there is nothing weak, sickly, or effeminate; a chaste severity pervades their delineations, and whatever they say appears to emanate from a serious mind, accustomed to the contemplation of great objects, without ever sinking under them from imbecility, or attempting to supply a deficiency of interest, by puerile exaggerations and feeble ornaments. The exquisite propriety of their representations is chiefly to be ascribed to their habitual seriousness; and the latter to their seeing things as they are.

Having touched on the principal difficulties attending the *public* exercise of the ministry, it may be expected something will be said on its more private functions. To affirm it to be the duty of a pastor to visit his people *often*, is, perhaps, affirming too much; the more frequently he converses with them, however, provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his ministry acceptable. The seasonable introduction of religious topics is often of such admirable use, that there are few qualities more enviable than the talent of teaching from house to house; though the modern state of manners, I am aware, has rendered this branch of the pastoral office much more difficult than in former times. In a country village, where there is more simplicity, less dissipation, and less hurry of business than in large towns, prudent exertions in this kind may be considered as eminently proper and beneficial. The extent to which they should be carried must be determined by circumstances, without attempting to prescribe any other rule than this, that the conversation of a Christian minister should be always such, as is adapted to strengthen, not impair, the impression of his public instructions. Though it is not necessary, nor expedient, for him to be always conversing on the subject of religion, his conversation should invariably have a religious tendency; that whatever excursions he indulges, the return to serious topics may be easy

and natural. The whole cast of his character should be such as is adapted to give weight to the exercise of his ministerial functions. On the peculiar force with which the obligations of virtue attach to a Christian teacher, the purity and correctness of your own conduct, while it would embolden me to speak with the greater freedom, make it less necessary for me to insist. You are aware that moral delinquency in *him*, produces a sensation as when an armor-bearer fainteth; that he can neither stand nor fall by himself; and that it is impossible for him to deviate essentially from the path of rectitude, without incurring the guilt and infamy of Jeroboam, who is never mentioned but to be stigmatized as he *who taught Israel to sin. Be thou an ensample to the flock in faith, in purity, in conversation, in doctrine, in charity.* Instead of satisfying ourselves in the acquisition of virtue with the attainments of a learner, we must aspire to the perfection of a master; and give to our conduct the correctness of a pattern. We are called to such a conquest over the world, and such an exhibition of the spirit of Christ, as shall not merely exempt us from censure, but excite to emulation. *Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world*, said our Saviour to his disciples, whom he was about to send forth in the character of public teachers. As persons to whom the conduct of souls is committed, we cannot make a wrong step without endangering the interests of others; so that if we neglect to take our soundings, and inspect our chart, ours is the misconduct of the pilot, who is denied the privilege of perishing alone. The immoral conduct of a Christian minister is little less than a public triumph over the religion he inculcates; and when we recollect the frailty of our nature, the snares to which we are exposed, and the wiles of our adversary, who will proportion his efforts to the advantages resulting from his success, we must be aware how much the necessity of maintaining an exemplary conduct adds to the difficulty of the ministerial function.

With the utmost propriety of conduct, and the greatest skill exerted in your work, we dare not flatter you with the prospect of unmingled success. Under the most judicious method of treatment, the maladies of some will prove incurable, and they will perish under your hand. While to some, the gospel is a *savor of life unto life*, to others it will prove *the savor of death unto death;* and in the course of your labors, you will meet with frequent disappointments where you have formed the most sanguine expectations. *Some who did run well, will afterwards be hindered; and of others who have clean escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, being afterwards entangled therein, the latter end will be worse than the beginning.* Many a Demas, it is probable, will forsake

you, *having loved this present world;* and by many of your hearers, who now evince the most zealous attachment, you may hereafter be considered as an enemy, because you tell them the truth. In certain instances, your ministry will be attended with consequences which you cannot contemplate without deep concern; for the sword of the Spirit is an awful weapon, which will exert, where it fails to inflict a salutary wound, its *destructive* edge. Against those of your hearers who reject your message, though now an ambassador of peace, and often a weeping suppliant at their feet, you will ere long appear a swift witness before God, and be compelled, by your voice, to exasperate the accents of vengeance, and augment the vials of wrath. *You are set for the rising and falling of many in Israel.*

III. But it is time to turn to a more pleasing part of our subject, and to remind you of some of the *supports* by which these sources of discouragement are balanced.

1. The office you have undertaken is of divine institution. The unhappy disputes which have prevailed in the church, respecting the proper channels for conveying, and the legitimate mode of vesting it, are so far from weakening or perplexing the evidence of this truth, that they may be considered as so many concurrent suffrages in its favor; since it is allowed, on all hands, that the Christian ministry is an ordinance of God; an expedient for the improvement of mankind, of his devising, and supported by his authority. But of that wisdom which pervades the works of God, the church is the principal scene; *to the intent*, saith the Apostle, *that to principalities and powers, might be made known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.* Hence we may be certain that so leading a branch of its constitution as that under our consideration, cannot fail of being adapted, in the best possible manner, to promote the interest of religion; nor is it difficult to perceive, that if men are to be wrought upon by reason and persuasion, the setting apart an order for the express purpose of instructing them in the concerns of salvation, must have a beneficial tendency; an order, be it remembered, not appointed like the priests of pagan antiquity, for the performance of ceremonies, but for the inculcation of truth; not to conduct the pomp of lustrations and sacrifices, but to *watch for souls as those that must give an account.* Nothing similar to this was known in the heathen religions; it is peculiar to Christianity, and evincing the simple wisdom of its author, is as original in its conception, as it is admirable in its effects. Its simplicity, its distance from whatever is dazzling in the eyes of mankind, is one of its highest recommendations; for the Christian minister is beautifully compared to a fisherman, who would only be embarrassed by those in-

struments and appendages which belong to more splendid but less useful employments.

2. Another consideration calculated to afford us encouragement is, that the materials of our work are ready furnished to our hand, and, at the same time, of a nature admirably adapted to our purpose. Our office is that of stewards of the mysteries of the kingdom; our duty, faithfully to dispense the stores which superior wisdom and opulence have provided. It is not necessary for us to stretch our invention in the discovery of topics and arguments fitted to move the mind, and impel it in a right direction, which, if we may judge from past experience, would be a most unpromising undertaking. A doctrine, full, pure, perfect, to which nothing can be added without debasing its spirit, nothing taken away without impairing its proportions, is committed to our trust, to be retained and preserved, just as we have received it, and delivered to our hearers in all its primitive simplicity. Like the works of nature, while it exhibits, at first view, an impress of its author, in the unequivocal character it bears of purity and majesty, it improves on a closer examination, and the more deeply it is investigated, the more the wisdom of the contrivance, in its exquisite adaptation to the state and condition of mankind, becomes conspicuous. As the discovery of a way of salvation for a fallen race, of the method by which a guilty and degenerate creature may recover the image and favor of his Maker, which we must ever remember is its most essential characteristic, what is wanting to its perfection? what information or assurance beyond what it contains, calculated to awe, enlighten, convince, and encourage? The facts it exhibits, supported by clear and indubitable testimony, are more extraordinary than ever entered the mind of man in its widest excursions, combining all the sobriety of truth, with more than the grandeur of fiction; and the doctrines connected with these facts, by the easiest and most natural inference, are of infinite moment. To a serious mind, the truths of the Christian religion appear with such an air of unaffected greatness, that, in comparison of these, all other speculations and reasonings seem like the amusements of childhood. When the Deity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of the Son of God, the sanctification of the church, and the prospects of glory, have engaged our contemplation, we feel, in turning our attention to other objects, a strange descent, and perceive, with the certainty of demonstration, that, as the earth is too narrow for the full developement of these mysteries, they are destined, by their consequences and effects, to impregnate an eternal duration. We are not at all surprised at finding that the ancient prophets searched into these mysteries with great but unsuccessful diligence, that the

angels desire to look into them, or that the Apostles were lost in the contemplation of those riches which they proclaimed and imparted. Are you desirous of fixing the attention of your hearers strongly on their everlasting concerns? No peculiar refinement of thought, no subtilty of reasoning, much less the pompous exaggerations of secular eloquence, are wanted for that purpose; you have only to imbibe deeply the mind of Christ, to let his doctrine enlighten, his love inspire your heart, and your situation, in comparison of other speakers, will resemble that of the angel of the Apocalypse, who was seen standing in the sun. Draw your instructions immediately from the Bible; the more immediately they are derived from this source, and the less they are tinctured with human distinctions and refinements, the more salutary, and the more efficacious. Let them be taken fresh from the spring. *You*, I am persuaded, will not satisfy yourself with the study of Christianity in narrow jejune abridgments and systems, but contemplate it, in its utmost extent, as it subsists in the sacred oracles; and, in investigating these, you will permit your reason and conscience an operation, as free and unfettered, as if none had examined them before. The neglect of this produces, too often, an artificial scarcity, where some of the choicest provisions of the household are exploded or overlooked.

When we inculcate, with so much earnestness, an attention to the mind of Christ, as exhibited in the Scriptures, let us not be understood to exclude his precepts, or to countenance, for a moment, the too frequent neglect of Christian morality. While you delight in displaying the riches of divine grace, conspicuous in the work of redemption, as the grand motive to love and trust in the Redeemer, you will not forget frequently to admonish your hearers, that he only *loveth him who keepeth his sayings;* the illustration of which, in their bearings upon the different relations and circumstances of life, will form, if you follow the apostolic example, a most important branch of your ministry. Not content with committing the obligation of morality to the arbitration of feeling, much less with faintly hinting at it, as an obvious inference from orthodox doctrine, you will illustrate its principles with an energy, a copiousness, a fulness of detail, proportioned to its acknowledged importance. You will not be silent on the precepts, from an apprehension of infringing on the freedom of the gospel, nor sink the character of the legislator in that of the Saviour of the church. A morality, more elevated and pure than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus, will breathe through your sermons, founded on a basis, which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions, which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise—a morality of which the love of God,

and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer, are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb, and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all its own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the gospel. Truth and holiness are, in the Christian system, so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one, lays the only foundation for the other. For the *illustration* of particular branches of morals, we may consult Pagan writers on ethics, with advantage ; but in search of *principles*, it is at our peril that we desert the school of Christ; since we are complete in him, and all the moral excellence to which we can aspire is but Christianity embodied ; or, if we may be allowed to change the figure, the impress of the gospel upon the heart. The perfection of the Christian system, considered as the instrument of renovating the human mind, is the second consideration.

3. The third consideration to which I would direct your attention, is, that of its being the dispensation of the Spirit. To this the Apostle immediately refers in the context, where he is contrasting the Christian with the Jewish institute. *Who hath also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit ; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death written and engraven in stones was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be more glorious.* From this circumstance, he infers, the superior dignity of the Christian ministry. The miraculous gifts intended for a sign to unbelievers, and to aid the gospel, during its first struggle with the powers of Pagan darkness, have long since ceased, with the exigency that called them forth ; but the renewing and sanctifying agency of the Spirit remains, and will continue to the end of time ; the express declaration of our Saviour not admitting a doubt of its perpetuity. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* To the world, who, in their unrenewed state are unsusceptible of his sanctifying impress, he is promised, in the preparatory form of a spirit of conviction; to believers, he is promised as an indwelling principle, an ever-present Deity, who consecrates the hearts of the faithful to be his perpetual abode. Hence the ministers of Christ are not dependent for success on the force of moral suasion ; not merely the teachers of an external religion, including truths the most momentous, and duties of the highest obligation ; they are also the instruments through whom a super-

natural agency is exerted. And hence, in the conversion of souls, we are not to compare the difficulties to be surmounted, with the feeble resources of human power, but with his, with whom nothing is impossible. To this the inspired historian every where directs our attention, as alone sufficient to account for the signal success which crowned the labors of the first preachers. If a great multitude at Antioch turned to the Lord, it was because the "hand of the Lord was with them;" if Lydia believed, in consequence of giving attention to the things that were spoken, it was because the "Lord opened her heart;" if Paul planted, and Apollos watered, with success, it was "the Lord who gave the increase;" and highly as they were endowed, and though invested with such extensive authority, they did not presume to count upon any thing from themselves; their sufficiency was of God. As the possibility of such an influence can be doubted by none who believe in a Deity, so the peculiar consolation derived from the doctrine that asserts it, seems to be this, that it renders what was merely possible, certain; what was before vague and undetermined, fixed, by reducing the interposition of the Almighty, in the concerns of salvation, to a stated method and a settled law. The communication of the Spirit, to render the gospel efficacious, becomes a standing ordinance of heaven, and a full security for its final triumph over every opposing force. "My word," said the Lord by the prophet, "shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish the thing whereunto I sent it." At the same time, connected as it is by the very tenor of the promise, with the publication of an external revelation, and professing to set its seal only to the testimony of Jesus, it precludes, as far as possible, every enthusiastic pretension, by leaving the appeal to Scripture as full, and uncontrolled as if no such agency were supposed. It is strange that any should be found to deny a doctrine so consolatory, under the pretence of its derogating from the sufficiency of Revelation, when it not only ascribes to it all the efficacy that can belong to an instrument, or external means; but confers the highest honor upon it, by marking it out as the only fountain of instruction to which the agency of the Deity is inseparably attached. The idea of his immediate interposition must necessarily increase our veneration for whatever is connected with it; and let it ever be remembered, that the internal illumination of the Spirit is merely intended to qualify the mind for distinctly perceiving, and cordially embracing those objects, and no other, which are exhibited in the written word. To dispel prejudice, to excite a disposition for inquiry, and to infuse that love of the truth, without which we can neither be transformed by its power nor bow to its dictates, is the grand scope of spiritual agency; and how this should derogate from the dignity of the

truth itself, it is not easy to conceive. The inseparable alliance between the Spirit and the Word secures the harmony of the divine dispensations; and since that Spirit of truth can never contradict himself, whatever impulse he may give, whatever disposition he may communicate, it involves no irreverence towards that divine agent to compare his operations with that standing revelation, which, equally claiming him for its author, he has expressly appointed for the trial of the spirits.

Let me earnestly intreat you, by keeping close to the fountain of grace, to secure a large measure of its influence. In your private studies, and in your public performances, remember your absolute dependence on superior aid; let your conviction of this dependence become so deep and practical, as to prevent your attempting any thing in your own strength, after the example of St. Paul, who, when he had occasion to advert to his labors in the gospel, checks himself by adding, with ineffable modesty, *yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* From that vivid perception of truth, that full assurance of faith, which is its inseparable attendant, you will derive unspeakable advantage in addressing your hearers; a seriousness, tenderness, and majesty, will pervade your discourses, beyond what the greatest unassisted talent can command. In the choice of your subjects it will lead you to what is most solid and useful, while it enables you to handle them in a manner the most efficacious and impressive. Possessed of this celestial unction, you will not be under the temptation of neglecting a plain gospel, in quest of amusing speculations or unprofitable novelties; the most ordinary topics will open themselves with a freshness and interest, as though you had never considered them before; and *the things of the Spirit* will display their inexhaustible variety and depth. You will pierce the invisible world; you will look, so to speak, into eternity, and present the essence and core of religion, while too many preachers, for want of spiritual discernment, rest satisfied with the surface and the shell. It will not allow us to throw one grain of incense on the altar of vanity; it will make us forget ourselves so completely, as to convince our hearers we do so; and, displacing every thing else from the attention, leave nothing to be felt, or thought of, but the majesty of truth, and the realities of eternity.

In proportion to the degree in which you possess this sacred influence, will be the earnestness with which you implore it in behalf of your hearers. Often *will you bow the knee to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will grant unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance among them that believe.*

On the one hand, it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for a simple dependence upon spiritual aid; and, on the other, that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of divine interposition, as far as *they* are concerned; for when has the arm of the Lord been revealed to those pretended teachers of Christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labor in a field, respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and, despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no *divine* assistance.

4. Let me request you to consider the dignity and importance of the profession which you have assumed. I am aware that the bare mention of these, as attributes of the Christian ministry (especially when exercised among Protestant dissenters,) may provoke a smile; we contend, however, that if the dignity of an employment is to be estimated, not by the glitter of external appearances, but by the magnitude and duration of the consequences involved in its success, the ministerial function is an high and honorable one. Though it is not permitted us to magnify ourselves, we may be allowed to magnify our office; and, indeed, the juster the apprehensions we entertain of what belongs to it, the deeper the conviction we shall feel of our defects. Independently of every other consideration, that office cannot be mean which the Son of God condescended to sustain; for, *the word which we preach first began to be spoken by the Lord;* and, while he sojourned upon earth, that Prince of Life was chiefly employed in publishing his own religion. That office cannot be mean, whose end is the recovery of man to his original purity and happiness—the illumination of the understanding—the communication of truth—and the production of principles which will bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. As the material part of the creation was formed for the sake of the immaterial; and of the latter the most momentous characteristic is its moral and accountable nature, or, in other words, its capacity of virtue and of vice; that labor cannot want dignity, which is exerted in improving man in his highest character, and fitting him for his eternal destination. Here alone is certainty and durability; for, however highly we may esteem the arts

and sciences, which polish our species, and promote the welfare of society; whatever reverence we may feel, and ought to feel, for those laws and institutions, whence it derives the security necessary for enabling it to enlarge its resources and develope its energies, we cannot forget that these are but the embellishments of a scene we must shortly quit—the decorations of a theatre, from which the eager spectators and applauded actors must soon retire. *The end of all things is at hand.* Vanity is inscribed on every earthly pursuit, on all sublunary labor; its materials, its instruments, and its objects will alike perish. An incurable taint of mortality has seized upon, and will consume them ere long. The acquisitions derived from religion, the graces of a renovated mind, are alone permanent. This is the mystic inclosure, rescued from the empire of change and death; this is the field which the Lord has blessed; and this word of the kingdom, the seed which alone produces immortal fruit, the very bread of life, with which, under a higher economy, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, will feed his flock and replenish his elect, through eternal ages. How high and awful a function is that which proposes to establish in the soul an interior dominion—to illuminate its powers by a celestial light—and introduce it to an intimate, ineffable, and unchanging alliance with the Father of Spirits. What an honor to be employed as the instrument of conducting that mysterious process by which men are born of God; to expel from the heart the venom of the old serpent; to purge the conscience from invisible stains of guilt; to release the passions from the bondage of corruption, and invite them to soar aloft into the regions of uncreated light and beauty; "to say to the prisoners, go forth, to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves!" These are the fruits which arise from the successful discharge of the Christian ministry; these the effects of the gospel, wherever it becomes the power of God unto salvation; and the interests which they create, the joy which they diffuse, are felt in other worlds.

In insisting on the dignity attached to the ministerial office, it is far from my intention to supply fuel to vanity, or suggest such ideas of yourself as shall tempt you to lord it over God's heritage. Let the importance of your station be rather felt and acknowledged in its beneficial results, than ostentatiously displayed; and the consciousness of it, instead of being suffered to evaporate in authoritative airs and pompous pretensions, produce a concentration of your powers. If the great Apostle was content to be a helper of the joy, without claiming dominion over the faith of his converts, how far should we be from advancing such a claim. If he served the Lord with humility and many tears; if he appeared among the churches which he planted, in fear, and in weakness,

and with much trembling, we may learn how possible it is to combine, with true dignity, the most unassuming deportment, and the deepest conviction of our weakness and unworthiness, with a vigorous discharge of whatever belongs to the apostolic much more to the pastoral office. The proper use to be made of such considerations as have now been suggested, is, to "stir up the gift which is in us," to apply ourselves to our work with becoming resolution, and anticipate, in dependence on the divine blessing, important effects. The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right arm is withered; nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains. For no man ever excelled in a profession to which he did not feel an attachment bordering on enthusiasm; though what in other professions is enthusiasm, is, in ours, the dictate of sobriety and truth.

5. Recollect, for your encouragement, the reward that awaits the faithful minister. Such is the mysterious condescension of divine grace, that although it reserves to itself the exclusive honor of being the fountain of all, yet, by the employment of human agency in the completion of its designs, it contrives to multiply its gifts, and to lay a foundation for eternal rewards. When the church, in the perfection of beauty, shall be presented to Christ, as a bride adorned for her husband, the faithful pastor will appear as the friend of the bridegroom, who "greatly rejoices because of the bridegroom's voice." His joy will be the joy of his Lord, inferior in degree, but of the same nature, and arising from the same sources; while he will have the peculiar happiness of reflecting that he has contributed to it; contributed, as an humble instrument, to that glory and felicity of which he will be conscious he is utterly unworthy to partake. To have been himself the object of mercy, to have been the means of imparting it to others, and of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ, will produce a pleasure which can never be adequately felt or understood, until we see him as he is. From that oneness of spirit, from that inseparable conjunction of interest, which will then be experienced in its utmost extent, will arise a capacity of sharing the triumph of the Redeemer, and of participating in the delight with which he will survey his finished work, when a new and fairer creation shall arise out of the ruins of the first. And is this the end, he will exclaim, of all my labors, my toils, and watchings, my expostulation with sinners, and my efforts to console the faithful! and is this the issue of that ministry under which I was often ready to sink! and this the glory of which I heard so much, understood so little, and announced to my hearers with lisping accents, and a stammering tongue! Well might it be styled the glory *to be revealed.* Auspicious day! on which I embarked in this undertaking, on

which the love of Christ, with a sweet and sacred violence, impelled me to feed his sheep and to feed his lambs. With what emotion shall we, who being entrusted with so holy a ministry, shall find mercy to be faithful, hear that voice from heaven, "Rejoice and be glad, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!" With what rapture shall we recognize, amidst an innumerable multitude, the seals of our ministry, the persons whom we have been the means of conducting to that glory!

Hence we discern the futility of the objection against the doctrine of future rewards, drawn from an apprehension, that to be actuated by such a motive, argues a mean and mercenary disposition; since the reward to which we aspire, in this instance at least, grows out of the employment in which we are engaged, and will consist in enjoyments which can only be felt and perceived by a refined and elevated spirit. The success of our undertaking will, in reality, reward itself, by the complete gratification it will afford to the sentiments of devotion and benevolence, which, in their highest perfection, form the principal ingredient in future felicity. To have co-operated in any degree towards the accomplishment of that purpose of the Deity, to reconcile all things to himself, by reducing them to the obedience of his Son; which is the ultimate end of all his works; to be the means of recovering, though it were but an inconsiderable portion of a lapsed and degenerate race to eternal happiness, will yield a satisfaction exactly commensurate to the force of our benevolent sentiments, and the degree of our loyal attachment to the Supreme Potentate. The consequences involved in *saving a soul from death, and hiding a multitude of sins*, will be duly appreciated in that world where the worth of souls, and the malignity of sin, are fully understood; while, to extend the triumphs of the Redeemer, by forming him in the hearts of men, will produce a transport which can only be equalled by the gratitude and love we shall feel towards the Source of all our good.

Before I close this discourse, which has, perhaps, already detained you too long, let me suggest one reflection which so naturally arises from the view we have taken of the ministerial office, that I cannot think it right to pass it over in silence. The consideration to which we allude, respects the advantages possessed by the Christian minister for the cultivation of personal piety. "Blessed is the man," said the royal Psalmist, "whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee; blessed are they who dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." If he was so strongly impressed with a conviction of the high privilege annexed to the priesthood, by virtue of its being allowed a nearer

approach to God, in the services of the sanctuary, the situation of a Christian minister is not less distinguished, nor less desirable. It is the only one, in which our general calling as Christians, and our particular calling as men, perfectly coincide. In a life occupied in actions that terminate in the present moment, and in cares and pursuits, extremely disproportionate to the dignity of our nature, but rendered necessary by the imperfection of our state; it is but little of their time that the greater part of mankind can devote to the direct and immediate pursuit of their eternal interests. A few remnants, snatched from the business of life, is all that most can bestow. In our profession, the full force and vigor of the mind may be exerted on that which will employ it for ever; on *religion*, the final centre of repose; the goal to which all things tend, which gives to time all its importance, to eternity all its glory; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes which surround him, as incoherent and unmeaning as the leaves which the Sybil scattered in the wind. Our inaptitude to be affected in any measure proportioned to the intrinsic value of the interest in which we are concerned, and the objects with which we are conversant, is partly to be ascribed to the corruption of nature, partly to the limitation of our faculties. As far as this disproportion is capable of being corrected, the pursuits connected with our office, are unquestionably best adapted to that purpose, by closely fixing the attention on objects, which can never be contemned, but in consequence of being forgotten; nor ever surveyed with attention, without filling the whole sphere of vision. Though the scene of our labor is on earth, the things to which it relates subsist in eternity. We can give no account of our office, much less discharge any branch of it with propriety and effect, without adverting to a future state of being; while in a happy exemption from the tumultuous cares of life, our only concern with mankind, as far as it respects our official character, is to promote their everlasting welfare; our only business on earth, the very same that employs those exalted spirits, who are sent forth on embassies of mercy, *to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation*. Our duties and pursuits are distinguished from all others by their immediate relation to the ultimate end of human existence; so that while secular employments can be rendered innocent only by an extreme care to avoid the pollutions which they are so liable to contract, the ministerial functions bear an indelible impress of sanctity. The purposes accomplished by the ministry of the gospel, in the restoration of a fallen creature to the image of his Maker, are not among the *things which were made for man;* they are the *things for which man was made;* since, without regard to time or place, they are

essential to his perfection and happiness. How much of heaven is naturally connected with an office whose sole purpose is to conduct man thither! and what a superiority to the love of the world may be expected from men who are appointed to publish that dispensation which reveals its danger, detects its vanity, rebukes its disorders, and foretells its destruction!

He must know little of the world, and still less of his own heart, who is not aware how difficult it is, amidst the corrupting examples with which it abounds, to maintain the spirit of devotion unimpaired, or to preserve, in their due force and delicacy, those vivid moral impressions, that quick perception of good, and instinctive abhorrence of evil, which form the chief characteristic of a pure and elevated mind. These, like the morning dew, are easily brushed off in the collisions of worldly interest, or exhaled by the meridian sun. Hence the necessity of frequent intervals of retirement, when the mind may recover its scattered powers, and renew its strength by a devout application to the Fountain of all grace.

To the ordinary occupations of life we are rather indebted for the trial of our virtue, than for the matter, or the motive; and, however criminal it would be to neglect them, in our present state, they can only be reduced under the dominion of religion, by a general intention of pleasing God. But, in carrying into effect the designs of the gospel, we are communicating that pure element of good, which, like the solar light, pervades every part of the universe, and forms, there is every reason to believe, the most essential ingredient in the felicity of all created beings.

If in the actual commerce of the world, the noblest principles are often sacrificed to mean expedients, and the rules of moral rectitude made to bend to the indulgence of vain and criminal passions, how happy for us that we are under the necessity of contemplating them in their abstract grandeur, of viewing them as an emanation of the divine beauty; as the immutable law of the creation, embodied in the character of the Saviour, and illustrated in the elevated sentiments, the holy lives, and triumphant deaths, of prophets, saints and martyrs. *We* are called, every moment, to ascend to first principles, *to stand in the council of God*, and to imbibe the dictates of celestial wisdom in their *first* communication, before they become debased, and contaminated by a mixture with grosser elements.

The bane of human happiness is ordinarily not so much an absolute ignorance of what is best, as an inattention to it, accompanied with a habit of not adverting to prospects the most certain, and the most awful. But how can we be supposed to contract this inadvertence, who are incessantly engaged in placing truth in

every possible light, tracing it in its utmost extent, and exhibiting it in all its evidence? Can we be supposed to forget "that day, and that hour, of which no man knoweth," who are stationed as watchmen to give the alarm, to announce the first symptoms of danger, and to cry in the ears of a sleeping world, "behold the bridegroom cometh;" or, however inattentive others may be to the approach of our Lord, can it ever vanish from our minds, who are detained by him in his sanctuary, on purpose to preserve it pure, to trim the golden lamps, and maintain the hallowed fire, that he may find nothing neglected, or in disorder, when he "shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom we delight in?"

Men are ruined in their eternal interests, by failing to look within; by being so absorbed in the pursuit of external good, as to neglect the state of their hearts. But can this be supposed to be the case with us, who must never hope to discharge our office with effect, without an intimate acquaintance with the inward man —without tracing the secret operations of nature and of grace— without closely inspecting the causes of revival, and of decay, in the spiritual life, and detecting the most secret springs, and sable artifices of temptation; in all which, we shall be successful, just in proportion to the degree of devout attention we bestow on the movements of our own minds?

Men are ruined in their eternal interests by living as though they were their own, and neglecting to realize the certainty of a future account. But it must surely require no small effort, to divert our attention from this truth, who have not only the same interest in it with others, but in consequence of the care of souls, possess a responsibility of a distinct and awful character; since not one of those to whom that care extends, can fall short of salvation through our neglect, or default, but "his blood will be required at our hands." Where, in short, can we turn our eyes, without meeting with incentives to piety; what part of the sacred function can we touch, which will not remind us of the beauty of holiness, the evil of sin, and the emptiness of all sublunary good; or, where we shall not find ourselves in a temple, resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations?

I feel a pleasing conviction, that, in consequence of deriving from your ministry that spiritual aid it is so adapted to impart, both your piety and usefulness will continue to increase, and by being intimately incorporated, aid and strengthen each other; so that your profiting shall appear unto all men, and while you are watering others, you yourself shall be abundantly watered of God. Thus will you be enabled to adopt the language of the beloved Apostle, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with

our eyes, which we have lookèd upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you." Thus will you possess that unction, from which your hearers cannot fail, under the divine blessing, of reaping the highest benefit; for, while we are exploring the mines of revelation, for the purpose of exhibiting to mankind the "unsearchable riches of Christ," we are not in the situation of those unhappy men, who merely toil for the advantage of others, and dare not appropriate to themselves an atom of that precious ore, on which their labor is employed; we are permitted and invited, first to enrich ourselves, and the more we appropriate, the more shall we impart. It is my earnest prayer, my dear brother, "that you may feed the church of the Lord which he has purchased with his own blood; that you may make full proof of your ministry; be instant in season and out of season; teach, exhort, and rebuke, with all longsuffering and authority." Then, should you be spared to your flock, you will witness the fruit of your labors in a spiritual plantation, growing under your hand, adorned with "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified;" and while neglecting worldly considerations, you are intent on the high ends of your calling, inferior satisfactions will not be wanting, but you will meet, among the seals of your ministry, with fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers. Or should your career be prematurely cut short, you will have lived long enough to answer the purposes of your being, and to leave a record in the consciences of your hearers, which will not suffer you soon to be forgotten. Though dead, you will still speak; you will speak from the tomb; it may be, in accents more powerful and persuasive, than your living voice could command.*

* Of this we have a striking instance in the premature death of the late Mr. Spencer, of Liverpool. The sensation excited by the sudden removal of that extraordinary young man, accompanied with such affecting circumstances, has not subsided, nor abated, as we are informed, much of its force. The event which has drawn so great a degree of attention, has been well improved in several excellent discourses on the occasion. The unequalled admiration he excited while living, and the deep and universal concern expressed at his death, demonstrate him to have been no ordinary character; but one of those rare specimens of human nature, which the great author of it produces at distant intervals, and exhibits for a moment, while he is hastening *to make them up among his jewels*. The high hopes entertained of this admirable youth, and the shock approaching to consternation, occasioned by his death, will, probably, remind the classical reader of the inimitable lines of Virgil on Marcellus.

> O nate, ingentem luctum ne quære tuorum.
> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
> Esse sinent.

The writer of this deeply regrets his never having had an opportunity of witnessing his extraordinary powers; but from all he has heard from the best judges, he can entertain no doubt, that his talents in the pulpit were unrivalled, and that, had his life been spared, he would, in all probability, have carried the talent of preaching to a greater perfection than it ever attained, at

least, in this kingdom. His eloquence appears to have been of the purest stamp, effective, not ostentatious, consisting less in the striking preponderance of any one quality, requisite to form a public speaker, than in an exquisite combination of them all; whence resulted an extraordinary power of impression which was greatly aided by a natural and majestic elocution. To these eminent endowments, he added, from the unanimous testimony of those who knew him best, a humility and modesty, which, while they concealed a great part of his excellencies from himself, rendered them the more engaging and attractive. When we reflect on these circumstances, we need the less wonder at the passionate concern excited by his death. For it may truly be said of him as of St. Stephen, *that devout men made great lamentation over him.* May the impressions produced by the event never be effaced; and above all, may it have the effect of engaging such as are embarked in the Christian ministry, to *work while it is called to-day.*

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF

HER LATE ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF WALES,

PREACHED AT

HARVEY-LANE, LEICESTER,

NOVEMBER 16, 1817.

A

SERMON.

JEREMIAH XV. 9.

She hath given up the ghost : her sun hath gone down while it was yet day.

IT has been the approved practice of the most enlightened teachers of religion, to watch for favorable occasions to impress the mind with the lessons of wisdom and piety; with a view to which they have been wont to advert to recent events of an interesting order, that by striking in with a train of reflection already commenced, they might the more easily and forcibly insinuate the instruction, it was their wish to convey. A sound discretion, it must be acknowledged, is requisite to make the selection. To descend to the details and occurrences of private life, would seldom consist with the dignified decorum suited to religious assemblies: the events to which the attention is directed on such occasions, should be of a nature somewhat extraordinary, and calculated to produce a deep and permanent impression. Admonition imparted under such circumstances, is styled in Scripture a word in season, or as it is more emphatically expressed in the original, "a word on the wheels," denoting the peculiar facility with which it makes its way to the heart.

In such a situation, the greatest difficulty a speaker has to surmount, is already obviated; attention is awake, an interest is excited, and all that remains, is to lead the mind already sufficiently susceptible, to objects of permanent utility. He originates nothing; it is not so much he that speaks, as the events which speak

for themselves; he only presumes to interpret their language, and to guide the confused emotions of a sorrowful and swollen heart into the channels of piety.

You are aware, my brethren, how strongly these observations apply to that most affecting occurrence which has recently spread such consternation through this great empire; an event which combines so many circumstances adapted to excite commiseration and concern, that not to survey it with attention, not to permit it to settle on the heart, would betray the utmost insensibility.

Devout attention to the dealings of Providence is equally consonant to the dictates of reason and of Scripture. He who believes in the superintendance of an Eternal Mind over the affairs of the universe, is equally irrational and indevout in neglecting to make the course of events the subject of frequent meditation; since the knowledge of God is incomparably more important than the most intimate acquaintance with our fellow creatures; and as the latter is chiefly acquired by an attentive observation of their conduct, so must the former be obtained in the same way. The operations of Providence are marked with a character as expressive of their great Author as the productions of human agency; and the same Being who speaks like himself in his word, acts like himself in the moral economy of the universe.

However inferior in precision and extent the knowledge derived from the last of these sources, compared to the copious and satisfactory information afforded by the Scriptures, it will appear too important to be neglected, when it is considered that it is *antecedent*, and that supposing it not sufficient of itself to evince the existence of a Deity, it is impossible for Revelation to supply that defect. The word of God assumes the certainty of his being and attributes, as a truth already sufficiently ascertained by the light of nature, while it proceeds to inform us on a multitude of subjects which elude the researches of finite reason. To us who have access to both these sources of information, they serve to illustrate each other; the obscurities of Providence are elucidated by Scripture; the declarations of Scripture are verified by Providence. One unfolds, as far as it is suitable to our state, the character and designs of the mysterious Agent; the other displays his works; and the admirable harmony which is found to subsist between them, strengthens and invigorates our confidence in both.

Hence a disregard to the operations of the Deity in his providential dispensations, is frequently stigmatized in Scripture as an unequivocal symptom of impiety. "Woe unto them," says Isaiah, "that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them; and the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their

feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge."

The striking analogy which the course of nature and Providence bears to the peculiar discoveries of Revelation, has been traced by an eminent prelate with a depth and precision, which reflect honor on human nature.* It is not my intention to enter on this topic; let me only be permitted to remark, that the analogy extends not only to the discoveries themselves, but to the manner in which they are conveyed. In both, a constant appeal is made to facts. A large portion of the Bible is devoted to history, where the grand truths which are taught, are intimately incorporated with the narrative, and mingled with the character and transactions of living agents; by which they are rendered far more impressive than if they had remained in an abstract and didactic form.

How languid the impression produced by a bare statement of the doctrine of a particular providence, for example, compared to that which we derive from the history of Abraham, whom we see conducted from kingdom to kingdom by a divine hand, and instructed where to pitch his tent, and where to erect his altars. The wonderful evolutions in the story of Joseph also illustrate the conduct of Him whose "ways are in the deep, and his paths past finding out," in a manner far more powerful than the clearest instruction conveyed in general propositions.

When the Almighty was pleased to introduce, by the advent of the Messiah, a more perfect and permanent economy of religion, he founded it entirely on facts, attested by the most unexceptionable evidence, and the most splendid miracles. The Apostles were *witnesses*, who, by the signs and wonders they wrought, made that appeal to the senses of men, which had been previously made to their own; and the doctrines which they taught in their writings, were little more than natural consequences resulting from the undoubted truth of their testimony. If they wish to inculcate the doctrine of a resurrection and future judgement, they deem it sufficient to appeal to the fact of Christ's resurrection, and session at the right hand of God; they present no evidence of a future state, except what ultimately terminates in the person of the Saviour, as the first begotten from the dead; and most anxiously warn us against resting our hope of salvation on any other basis, than that of a sensible sacrifice, "the offering of the body of Christ once for all." Thus whatever is sublime and consolatory in the Christian religion, originates in facts and events which appealed to the senses, and passed in this visible theatre; though their ultimate result is commensurate with eternity. In order to rescue us from

* Bishop Butler.

the idolatry of the creature, and the dominion of the senses, he who is intimately acquainted with our frame, makes use of sensible appearances, and causes his Son to become flesh, and to pitch his tent amongst us, that by faith in his crucified humanity, we may ascend, as by a mystic ladder, to the abode of the Eternal.

Providence, it has already been remarked, conveys its most impressive lessons in the same shape; and by clothing the abstractions of religion in the realities of life, renders them in a manner palpable. While they remain in the form of general truths, and are the objects of speculation, they affect us but little; they preserve us from the shallow sophistry of impiety, and conduct us to just conclusions on subjects of the last moment; but their control over the heart and conduct is scarcely felt. In order to be deeply impressed, we require some object to be presented, more in unison with the sensitive part of our nature—something more precise and limited, something which the mind may more distinctly realize, and the imagination more firmly grasp. The process of feeling widely differs in this respect from that of reasoning, and is regulated by opposite laws. In reasoning, we recede as far as possible, from sensible impressions; and the more general and comprehensive our conclusions, and the larger our abstractions, provided they are sustained by sufficient evidence, the more knowledge is extended and the intellect improved. Sensibility is excited, the affections are awakened, on the contrary, on those occasions, in which we tread back our steps, and descending from generalities, direct the attention to individual objects and particular events. We all acknowledge, for example, our constant exposure to death; but it is seldom we experience the practical impression of that weighty truth, except when we witness the stroke of mortality actually inflicted. We universally acknowledge the uncertainty of human prospects, and the instability of earthly distinctions; but it is when we behold them signally destroyed and confounded, that we feel our presumption checked, and our hearts appalled.

For this reason, he who spake as never man spake, was wont to convey his instructions by sensible images and in familiar apologues, that by concentrating the attention within the sphere of particular occurrences, and individual objects, the impressions of his lessons might become more vivid and more profound.

It is thus that Providence is addressing us at the present moment; and if we are wise, we shall convert the melancholy event before us, not to the purposes of political speculation, fruitless conjecture, or anxious foreboding, but (what is infinitely better) to a profound consideration of the hand of God; and then, though we may be at a loss to explore the reason of his conduct, we shall be at none how to improve it.

Criminal as it is always not to mark the footsteps of Deity, the guilt of such neglect is greatly aggravated, when he comes forth from his place to execute his judgements, and display his wrath; when he is pleased as at present, to extinguish in an instant the hopes of a nation, to clothe the throne in sackcloth, and involve a kingdom in mourning. The greatness, the suddenness of this calamity, accompanied with circumstances of the most tender and affecting interest, speaks to the heart in accents which nothing but the utmost obduration can resist; so that were it the sole intention of him who has inflicted it, to awaken the careless, and alarm the secure, among the higher orders especially, we are at a loss to perceive what could have been done more than has been accomplished. Whatever imagination can combine in an example of the uncertainty of life, the frailty of youth, the evanescence of beauty, and the nothingness of worldly greatness, in its highest state of elevation, is exhibited in this awful event in its full dimensions.

The first particular which strikes the attention in this solemn visitation, is the rank of the illustrious personage, who appears to have been placed on the pinnacle of society for the express purpose of rendering her fall the more conspicuous, and of convincing as many as are susceptible of conviction, that "man at his best estate is altogether vanity." The Deity himself adorned the victim with his own hands, accumulating upon her all the decorations and ornaments best adapted to render her the object of universal admiration. He permitted her to touch whatever this sublunary scene presents that is most attractive and alluring, but to grasp nothing; and after conducting her to an eminence whence she could survey all the glories of empire as her destined possession, closed her eyes in death.

That such an event should affect us in a manner very superior to similar calamities which occur in private life, is agreeable to the order of nature, and the will of God; nor is the profound sensation it has produced to be considered as the symbol of courtly adulation. The catastrophe itself, it is true, apart from its peculiar circumstances, is not a rare occurrence. Mothers often expire in the ineffectual effort to give birth to their offspring; both are consigned to the same tomb, and the survivor, after witnessing the wreck of so many hopes and joys, is left to mourn alone, "refusing to be comforted, because they are not." There is no sorrow which imagination can picture, no sign of anguish which nature agonized and oppressed can exhibit, no accent of woe, but what is already familiar to the ear of fallen, afflicted humanity; and the roll which Ezekiel beheld, flying through the heavens, inscribed within and without, "with sorrow, lamentation and woe,"

enters, sooner or later, into every house, and discharges its contents in every bosom. But in the private departments of life, the distressing incidents which occur, are confined to a narrow circle. The hope of an individual is crushed ; the happiness of a family is destroyed ; but the social system is unimpaired, and its movements experience no impediment, and sustain no sensible injury. The arrow passes through the air, which soon closes upon it, and all is tranquil. But when the great lights and ornaments of the world, placed aloft to conduct its inferior movements, are extinguished, such an event resembles the apocalyptic vial poured into that element, which changes its whole temperature, and is the presage of fearful commotions, of thunders, lightnings and tempests.

Independently of the political consequences which may result from an event which, by changing the order of succession, involves the prospects of the nation in obscurity, we are formed to be peculiarly affected by the spectacle of prostrate majesty, and fallen greatness. We are naturally prone to associate with the contemplation of exalted rank, the idea of superior felicity. We perceive in persons of that station, a command over the sources of enjoyment, a power of gratifying their inclinations in a multitude of forms from which others are precluded ; and as they appear to possess the means of supplying every want, of obviating every inconvenience, and of alleviating, to a considerable extent, every sorrow incident to humanity, it is not to be wondered at that we regard them as the darlings of nature, and the favorites of fortune. The share they possess of the bounties and indulgencies of Providence, is so much beyond the ordinary measure of allotment, and so large a portion of human art and industry is exerted in smoothing their passage, and strewing flowers in their path, that we almost necessarily associate ideas of superior enjoyment with a description of persons, for whose gratification the inferior classes seem born to toil.

We are so constituted also, that the sight of felicity, when it is not mixed with envy, is always connected with pleasing emotions, whether it is considered as possessed by ourselves or by others ; not excepting even the animal creation. For who can behold their harmless pleasures, the wild gambols of their young, rioting in the superabundance of life and excess of pleasure, without experiencing a momentary exhilaration ? As their enjoyments are considered too scanty and limited to excite a feeling of envy ; so from an opposite cause, the privileges attached to an elevated station seldom produce it. Happily for mankind, the corrosions of that baleful passion are almost entirely confined to equals, or to those between whom there exists some pretensions to equality ; who having started from nearly the same level, have recently dis-

tanced each other, in the chace of distinction, or of glory. But when the superiority we contemplate has been long possessed, when it is such as renders competition hopeless, and comparison absurd, the feelings of rivalry are superseded by an emotion of respect, and the spectacle presented of superior felicity, produces its primary and natural effect. We dwell with complacency on a system of arrangements so exquisitely adapted apparently to the production of happiness; and yield a sort of involuntary homage to the person in whom it centres, without appearing to disturb our pretensions, or interfere with our pursuits. Hence of all factitious distinctions, that of birth is least exposed to envy; the thought of aspiring to an equality in that respect, being instantly checked by the idea of impossibility. When we turn our eyes towards the possessors of distinguished opulence and power, so many glittering appendages crowd on the imagination, productive of agreeable emotion, that we lose sight of the essential equality of the species, and think less of the persons themselves, than of the artificial splendor which surrounds them.

That there is some illusion in these sentiments, that the balance in respect of real enjoyment is far from being so decidedly in favor of the opulent and the great, as they prompt us to imagine, is an indubitable fact. Nevertheless, the disposition they create to regard the external appearances of opulence and power, with respect unmingled with envy, and to acquiesce with pleasure in the visible superiority they confer, is productive of incalculable benefit. But for this, the distinctions of rank, and the privileges and immunities attached to each, on which much of the tranquillity, and all the improvements of society depend, would fall a prey to an unfeeling rapacity; the many would hasten to seize on the exclusive advantages of the few, and the selfish passions, uncontrolled by a more refined order of feeling, would break forth with a fury that would quickly overwhelm the mounds and fences of legal authority. By means of the sentiments to which we have adverted, society exerts a sort of plastic power over its members, which forms their habits and inclinations to a cheerful acquiescence in the allotments of Providence, and bestows on the positive institutions of man, the stability of nature.

As the necessary consequence of these sentiments, when great reverses befall the higher orders, the mind experiences a kind of revulsion; the contrast of their present with their past situation, produces a deeper sympathy than is experienced on other occasions. We measure the height from which they fell, and calculate the extent of their loss on a scale proportioned to the value we have been accustomed to attach to the immunities and enjoyments, of which it deprives them. The sight of such elaborate

preparations for happiness rendered abortive, of a majestic fabric so proudly seated and exquisitely adorned, suddenly overturned, disturbs the imagination like a convulsion of nature, and diffuses a feeling of insecurity and terror, as though nothing remained on which we could repose with confidence. Hence the misfortunes of princes who have survived their greatness, and terminated a brilliant career by captivity and death, have been selected by poets in every age, as the basis of those fictions which are invented for the purpose of producing commiseration.

To guard against these feelings being carried to excess, so as to induce an oblivion of moral distinction, a sacrifice of principle, a mean and pusillanimous prostration before the profligate and the vicious; to urge the necessity of correcting their aberrations by the dictates of reason and religion, is foreign to our purpose. The utility of a class of feelings is not the less certain, for their being liable to abuse. Let me rather avail myself of the awful dispensation before us, to suggest a warning to the possessors of these envied distinctions, not to overrate their value, nor confide in their continuance, which at most are but "the flower of the field," as much distinguished by its superior frailty, as by its beauty. They belong to the "fashion of that world which passeth away;" they contribute much to embellish and beautify this transitory abode, to the ornament of which, the Supreme Being has shewn himself not inattentive. As the God of order, whatever tends to secure and perpetuate it, is the object of his approbation; nor can we doubt that he regards with complacency that distribution of men into distinct orders, which assimilates the social system, to that variety which pervades the economy of nature.

Let their possessors remember, however, that they must shortly be divested of the brilliant appendages and splendid ornaments of rank and station, and enter into a world where they are unknown; where they will carry nothing but the essential elements of their being, impressed with those indelible characters which must sustain the scrutiny of Omniscience. These artificial decorations, be it remembered, are not, properly speaking, their own; the elevation to which they belong is momentary; and as the merit of an actor is not estimated by the part which he performs, but solely by the truth and propriety of his representation, and the peasant is often applauded where the monarch is hissed; so when the great drama of life is concluded, he who allots its scenes, and determines its period, will take an account of his servants, and assign to each his punishment or reward, in his proper character. The existence of a perfect and eternal mind, renders such an order of things necessary; for with whatever skill society may be organized, still it will make but a faint approximation to our limit-

ed conceptions of justice; and since there is an original mind in which these ideas subsist in their utmost perfection, whence the finite conception of justice is transcribed, they must at some period or other be realized. That they are not so at present is obvious. Merit is often depressed, vice exalted, and with the best regulations of human wisdom, executed with the utmost impartiality, malevolence will ever be armed with the power of inflicting a thousand nameless indignities and oppressions, with perfect impunity. Though the efficacy of human laws is far more conspicuous in restraining and punishing than in rewarding, in which their resources are extremely limited, it is only those flagrant offences that disturb the public tranquillity to which they extend; while the silent stream of misery issuing from private vice, which is incessantly impairing the foundations of public and individual happiness, by a secret and invisible sap, remains unchecked. The gradations even of rank, which are partly the cause, and partly the effect of the highest social improvements, are accompanied with so many incidental evils, that nothing but an enlarged contemplation of their ultimate tendency and effect, could reconcile us to the monstrous incongruities and deformities they display; in wealth which ruins its possessor, titles which dignify the base, and influence exerted to none but the most mischievous purposes. The enlightened observer of human affairs is often struck with horror at the consequences, incidentally resulting from laws and institutions which, on account of their general utility, command his unfeigned veneration. These are the unequivocal indications of a fallen state; but since it is also a state of probation, the irregularities by which it is distinguished, in the frequent exaltation of the wicked, and the humiliation and depression of the righteous, are such as furnish the fittest materials for trial. What state, let me ask, is better calculated than the present, to put it to the test, whether we will suffer ourselves to be swayed by the dictates of reason or the fascinations of pleasure; whether we will allow the future to predominate over the present, the things that are invisible over those that are seen, and preferring an eternal recompense with God, to the transitory objects of concupiscence, submit to be controlled by his will, and led by his Spirit.

Whatever reception these views may meet with, one thing is certain, that it is invariably the most necessary they should be inculcated where they are most unwelcome; and that if there be any one description of persons more in danger than another of being lulled into a forgetfulness of future prospects, it is to them especially the warning voice should be directed, the eternal world unveiled. And who but will acknowledge, that this danger is especially incident to such as bask in the smiles of fortune, and pos-

sessing an unlimited command over the sources of enjoyment, are bound to the world by the most vivid associations of pleasure and of hope. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," said one of the wisest of men, "lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain." While riches exempt their possessors from the temptation of meaner vices, his observation taught him, their peculiar exposure to practical impiety, and to that forgetfulness of God, which is the root and core of all our disorders.

Let them turn their eyes then for a moment to this illustrious Princess; who while she lived, concentred in herself whatever distinguishes the higher orders of society, and may now be considered as addressing them from the tomb.

Born to inherit the most illustrious monarchy in the world, and united at an early period to the object of her choice, whose virtues amply justified her preference, she enjoyed (what is not always the privilege of that rank,) the highest connubial felicity, and had the prospect of combining all the tranquil enjoyments of private life, with the splendor of a royal station. Placed on the summit of society, to her every eye was turned, in her every hope was centred, and nothing was wanting to complete her felicity, except perpetuity. To a grandeur of mind, suited to her illustrious birth, and lofty destination, she joined an exquisite taste for the beauties of nature, and the charms of retirement; where, far from the gaze of the multitude, and the frivolous agitations of fashionable life, she employed her hours in visiting, with her illustrious consort, the cottages of the poor, in improving her virtues, in perfecting her reason, and acquiring the knowledge best adapted to qualify her for the possession of power, and the cares of empire. One thing only was wanting to render our satisfaction complete, in the prospect of the accession of such a Princess; it was that she might become the living mother of children.

The long wished for moment at length arrived, but alas! the event anticipated with such eagerness will form the most melancholy page in our history.

It is no reflection on this amiable Princess to suppose, that in her early dawn, with the "dew of her youth" so fresh upon her, she anticipated a long series of years, and expected to be led through successive scenes of enchantment, rising above each other in fascination and beauty. It is natural to suppose she identified herself with this great nation which she was born to govern; and that while she contemplated its preeminent lustre in arts and in arms, its commerce encircling the globe, its colonies diffused through both hemispheres, and the beneficial effects of its institutions extending to the whole earth; she considered them as so

many component parts of her grandeur. Her heart, we may well conceive, would often be ruffled with emotions of trembling exstasy, when she reflected that it was her providence to live entirely for others, to compose the felicity of a great people, to move in a sphere which would afford scope for the exercise of philanthropy the most enlarged, of wisdom the most enlightened; and that while others are doomed to pass through the world in obscurity, she was to supply the materials of history, and to impart that impulse to society, which was to decide the destiny of future generations. Fired with the ambition of equalling, or surpassing, the most distinguished of her predecessors, she probably did not despair of reviving the remembrance of the brightest parts of their story, and of once more attaching the epoch of British glory to the annals of a female reign. It is needless to add that the nation went with her, and probably outstripped her in these delightful anticipations. We fondly hoped, that a life so inestimable, would be protracted to a distant period, and that after diffusing the blessings of a just and enlightened administration, and being surrounded by a numerous progeny, she would gradually, in a good old age, sink under the horizon, amidst the embraces of her family, and the benedictions of her country. But alas! these delightful visions are fled, and what do we behold in their room, but the funereal pall and shroud, a palace in mourning, a nation in tears, and the shadow of death, settled over both like a cloud! O the unspeakable vanity of human hopes! the incurable blindness of man to futurity! ever doomed to grasp at shadows, to seize with avidity what turns to dust and ashes in his hand, "to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind."

How must the heart of the royal parent be torn with anguish on this occasion; deprived of a daughter, who combined every quality suited to engage his affection, and elevate his hopes; an only child, the heir of his throne; and doomed, apparently, to behold the sceptre pass from his posterity into other hands; his sorrow must be such as words are inadequate to portray. Nor is it possible to withhold our tender sympathy, from the unhappy mother, who in addition to the wounds she has received by the loss of her nearest relations, and by still more trying vicissitudes, has witnessed the extinction of her last hope, in the sudden removal of one in whose bosom she might naturally hope to depose her griefs, and find a peaceful haven from the storms of life, and the tossings of the ocean. But above all, the illustrious consort of this lamented Princess, is entitled to the deepest commiseration. How mysterious are the ways of Providence, in rendering the virtues of this distinguished personage, the source of his greatest trials. By these he merited the distinction to which monarchs aspired

in vain, and by these he exposed himself to a reverse of fortune, the severity of which, can only be adequately estimated by this illustrious mourner. These virtues, however, will not be permitted to lose their reward. They will find it in the grateful attachment of the British nation, in the remembrance of his having contributed the principal share to the happiness of the most amiable and exalted of women; and above all, we humbly hope, when the agitations of time shall cease, in a reunion with the object of his attachment, before the presence of Him who will "wipe every tear from the eye."

When Jehovah was pleased to command Isaiah the prophet to make a public proclamation in the ears of the people, what was it, think you, he was ordered to announce? Was it some profound secret of nature, which had baffled the inquiries of philosophers, or some great political convulsion which was to change the destiny of empires? No; these are not the sort of communications most suited to the grandeur of his nature, or the exigencies of ours. "The voice said cry; and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever." (Isaiah 40: 6, 7, 8.) Instead of presenting to our eyes the mutations of power, and the revolutions of states and kingdoms, he exhibits a more awful and affecting spectacle,—the human race itself withering under the breath of his mouth, perishing under his rebuke; while he plants his eternal word, which subsists from generation to generation, in undecaying vigor, to console our wretchedness, and impregnate the dying mass with the seed of immortality. As the frailty of man, and the perpetuity of *His* promises, are the greatest contrast the universe presents, so the practical impression of this truth, however obvious, is the beginning of wisdom, nor is there a degree of moral elevation to which it will not infallibly conduct us.

The annunciation of life and immortality by the gospel, did it contain no other truth, were sufficient to cast all the discoveries of science into shade, and to reduce the highest improvements of reason to the comparative nothingness which the flight of a moment bears to eternity.

By this discovery, the prospects of human nature are infinitely widened, the creature of yesterday becomes the child of eternity, and as felicity is not the less valuable in the eye of reason because it is remote, nor the misery which is certain, less to be deprecated, because it is not immediately felt, the care of our future interests becomes our chief, and, properly speaking, our only concern.

All besides will shortly be nothing, and therefore, whenever it comes into competition with these, it is as the small dust of the balance.

Is it now any subject of regret, think you, to this amiable Princess so suddenly removed, "that her sun went down while it was yet day," or that prematurely snatched from prospects the most brilliant and enchanting, she was compelled to close her eyes so soon on a world, of whose grandeur she formed so conspicuous a part? No. Other objects occupy her mind, other thoughts engage her attention, and will continue to engage it for ever. All things with her are changed, and viewed from that pure and ineffable light, for which, we humbly hope, religion prepared her, the lustre of a diadem is scarcely visible, majesty emits a feeble and sickly ray, and all ranks and conditions of men appear but so many troops of pilgrims in different garbs, toiling through the same vale of tears, distinguished only by different degrees of wretchedness.

In the full fruition of eternal joys, she is so far from looking back with lingering regret on what she has quitted, that she is surprised it had the power of affecting her so much; that she took so deep an interest in the scenes of this shadowy state of being, while so near to an "eternal weight of glory;" and as far as memory may be supposed to contribute to her happiness, by associating the present with the past, it is not the recollection of her illustrious birth, and elevated prospects, but that she visited the abodes of the poor, and learned to weep with those that weep; that surrounded with the fascinations of pleasure, she was not inebriated by its charms, that she resisted the strongest temptations to pride, preserved her ears open to truth, was impatient of the voice of flattery; in a word, that she sought and cherished the inspirations of piety, and "walked humbly with her God."* This is fruit which survives, when the flower withers—the only ornaments and treasures we can carry into eternity.

While we look at this event with the eyes of flesh, and survey it in the aspect it bears towards our national prospects, it appears a most singular and affecting catastrophe. But considered in itself, or more properly in its relation to a certain, though invisible futurity, its consequences are but commensurate to those which result from the removal of the meanest individual. He whose death is as little regarded as the fall of a leaf in the forest, and he whose departure involves a nation in despair, are in this view of

* From the obscurity of the Author's situation, he must be supposed incapable of authenticating these traits in her character, from his personal knowledge; but from the respectable publications in which they are related, he entertains no doubt of their truth.

the subject (by far the most important one) upon a level. Before the presence of the great I AM, into which they both immediately enter, these distinctions vanish, and the true statement of the fact, on either supposition, is, that an immortal spirit has finished its earthly career; has passed the barriers of the invisible world, to appear before its Maker, in order to receive that sentence which will fix its irrevocable doom, "according to the deeds done in the body." On either supposition an event has taken place, which has no parallel in the revolutions of time, the consequences of which have not room to expand themselves within a narrower sphere, than an endless duration. An event has occurred, the issues of which must ever baffle and elude all finite comprehension, by concealing themselves in the depths of that abyss, of that eternity, which is the dwelling-place of Deity, where there is sufficient space for the destiny of each among the innumerable millions of the human race to develope itself, and without interference or confusion to sustain and carry forward its separate infinity of interest.

That there is nothing hyperbolical or extravagant in these conceptions, but that they are the "true sayings of God," you may learn from almost every page of the sacred oracles. For what are they, in fact, but a different mode of announcing the doctrine taught us in the following words; "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?"

When it is considered that the doctrine of a life to come, is ascertained by the advent of the Messiah, with a degree of evidence so superior to that which attaches to any other futurity, that he who refuses to believe it, on his testimony, would not be persuaded although one rose from the dead, the propensity to disregard it, however general, is the most astonishing phenomenon in nature. Man is naturally a prospective creature, endowed not only with a capacity of comparing the present with the past, but also of anticipating the future, and dwelling with anxious rumination on scenes which are yet remote. He is capable of carrying his views, of attaching his anxieties to a period much more distant that that which measures the limits of his present existence; capable, we distinctly perceive, of plunging into the depths of future duration, of identifying himself with the sentiments and opinions of a distant age, and of enjoying, by anticipation, the fame of which he is aware he shall never be conscious, and the praises he shall never hear. So strongly is he disposed to link his feelings with futurity, that shadows become realities when contemplated as subsisting there; and the phantom of posthumous celebrity, the faint image of his being, impressed on future generations, is often preferred to

the whole of his present existence, with all its warm and vivid realities. The complexion of the day that is passing over him, is determined by the anticipations of the morrow; the present borrows its brightness and its gloom from the future, which, presenting itself to his contemplation as in a mirror, incessantly agitates him with apparitions of terror or delight. In the calculations of interest, the mind is affected in the same manner; it is perpetuity which stamps its value on whatever we possess, so that the lowest epicure would prefer a small accession to his property to the most exquisite repast; and none are found so careless of futurity, as not to prefer the inheritance he may bequeath, to one of equal value, the title to which expires with his life.

How is it then that we find it so difficult to prevail upon men to fix their attention firmly on another world, that real future existence which reason assures us is probable, which Revelation teaches us is certain, which is separated from us by so narrow a boundary, and into which thousands of our fellow-creatures are passing every moment? How is it that the professed followers of Him especially, who descended from heaven, who came forth from the Father to conduct us thither, are so indisposed to turn their thoughts and contemplations to that unchanging state of being, into which they are so shortly to enter? It is not, we perceive, that to move forward is not congenial with our mental constitution; it is not because we are so enchanted with the present scene, as to be incapable of diverting our attention from it; for we are continually disquieted by a restless desire of something future; it is not because we are seldom warned, or reminded of another state of existence; for every funeral bell, every opening grave, every symptom of decay within, and of change without us, is a separate warning; to say nothing of the present most affecting dispensation, which has filled this nation with such consternation and distress.

Were any other event of far inferior moment, ascertained by evidence, which made but a distant approach to that which attests the certainty of a life to come; had we equal assurance, that after a very limited, though uncertain period, we should be called to migrate into a distant land, whence we were never to return, the intelligence would fill every breast with solicitude; it would become the theme of every tongue; and we should avail ourselves with the utmost eagerness of all the means of information respecting the prospects which awaited us in that unknown country. Much of our attention would be occupied in preparing for our departure; we should cease to consider the place we now inhabit as our home, and nothing would be considered as of moment, but as it bore upon our future destination. How strange is it then, that

with the certainty we all possess of shortly entering into another world, we avert our eyes as much as possible from the prospect; that we seldom permit it to penetrate us; and that the moment the recollection recurs, we hasten to dismiss it as an unwelcome intrusion! Is it not surprising that the volume we profess to re-recognize as the record of immortality, and the sole depository of whatever information it is possible to obtain respecting the portion which awaits us, should be consigned to neglect, and rarely, if ever, consulted with the serious intention of ascertaining our future condition?

That a creature formed for an endless duration should be disposed to turn his attention from that object, and to contract his views and prospects within a circle which, compared to eternity, is but a mathematical point, is truly astonishing; and as it is impossible to account for it from the natural constitution of the mind, it must originate in some great *moral* cause. It shews that some strange catastrophe has befallen the species; that some deep and radical malady is inherent in the moral system. Though philosophers of a certain description may attempt to explain and justify it on some ingenious hypothesis, yet in spite of metaphysical subtleties, the alarming inquiry will still return—How is it that the disposition of mankind is so much at variance with their prospects; that no train of reflections is more unwelcome than that which is connected with their eternal home? If the change is considered as a happy one; if the final abode to which we are hastening, is supposed to be an improvement on the present, why shrink back from it with aversion? If it is contemplated as a state of suffering, it is natural to inquire what it is, that has invested it with so dark and sombre a character? What is it which has enveloped that species of futurities in a gloom which pervades no other? If the indisposition to realize a life to come, arises in any measure from a vague presentiment that it will bring us, so to speak, into a closer contact with the Deity, by presenting clearer manifestations of his character and perfections, (and who can doubt that this is a principal cause) the proof it affords of a great deterioration in our moral condition is complete. For who will suppose it possible, a disposition to hide himself from his Creator should be an original part of the constitution of a reasonable creature? or what more portentous and unnatural than for him that is formed, to shun the presence of his Maker, and to place his felicity in the forgetfulness of him "in whom he lives, and moves and has his being?" If he is pained and disquieted whenever he is forcibly reminded of Him, whose power sustains, and whose bounty replenishes the universe with whatever is good and fair; if the source of being and of happiness is the object of terror, instead of confi-

dence and love, it is not easy to conceive what can afford a stronger conviction of guilt, or a more certain presage of danger.

The conclusion to which we are conducted is confirmed by inspiration, which assures us that a great revolution has actually befallen the species, and that in consequence of the entrance of sin into the world, we have incurred the forfeiture of the divine favor, and the loss of the divine image. In this situation it is not difficult to perceive, that the economy adapted to our relief, must include two things, the means of expiating guilt, and the means of moral renovation; in other words, an atoning sacrifice, and a sanctifying spirit. Both these objects are accomplished in the advent of the Saviour, who by presenting himself as a sin offering, has made ample satisfaction to offended justice, and purchased by his merits the renovating Spirit, which is freely offered to as many as sincerely seek it. By the former the obstructions to our happiness arising from the divine nature are removed; by the latter, the disqualification springing from our own. By providing a sacrifice of infinite value in the person of the Only Begotten, he has consulted his majesty as the righteous governor of the world, and has reconciled the seemingly incompatible claims of justice and of mercy. By bestowing the Spirit as the fruit of *his* mediation and intercession, whose "soul was made an offering for sin," pollution is purged, and that image of God restored to sinful creatures, which capacitates them for the enjoyment of pure and perfect felicity. Thus every requisite which we can conceive necessary in a restorative dispensation, is found in the gospel, exhibited with a perspicuity level to the meanest capacity, combined with such a depth in the contrivance, and such an exquisite adaptation to our state and condition, as surpasses finite comprehension. This is the substance of those glad tidings which constitute the *gospel;* to the cordial reception of which, must all the difference be ascribed, which will shortly be found between the condition of the saved and the lost.

Be assured, my Christian brethren, it is by a profound submission of the soul to this doctrine, offensive as it may be to the pride of human virtue, repugnant, as it undoubtedly is, to the dictates of philosophy, falsely so called, that we must "acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace." When we mention peace, however, we mean not the stupid security of a mind that refuses to reflect; we mean a tranquillity which rests upon an unshaken basis, which no anticipations however remote, no power of reflection however piercing or profound, no evolutions which time may disclose or eternity conceal, are capable of impairing; a peace which is founded on the oath and promise of him who cannot lie, which springing from the consciousness of an ineffable alliance with the Father

of Spirits, makes us to share in his fulness, to become a partner with him in his eternity; a repose pure and serene as the unruffled wave, which reflects the heavens from its bosom, while it is accompanied with a feeling of exultation and triumph, natural to such as are conscious that ere long, having overcome, they shall possess all things.

While the prize is so transcendently great, no unparalleled efforts, no incredible exertions, are requisite to obtain it; it is placed within the grasp of every hand. If the great sacrifice had not been presented, if the succors of Heaven had not been offered, if the glad tidings had not been proclaimed, nor life and immortality brought to light, our condition would indeed have been deplorable; and little encouragement should we have had to engage in the great work of seeking salvation. But now "all things are ready," and the chief, or rather the only pre-requisite, is a child-like docility, a disposition to derive wisdom from the fountain of light, strength from the strong, together with a fixed and immovable conviction, that the care of our eternal interests is the grand concern.

Some events, by the established course of nature are rendered so certain, that however important in their consequences, they are not the proper subjects of deliberation. Their certainty assumed as a basis in all our calculations and reasonings, is entitled to great weight in adjusting the plan of future operation; but it is with a view to other objects that our schemes are formed, and our anxiety exerted. Other events are precluded from deliberation, by an opposite reason, the perfect conviction that they will never arrive. Both these are regarded by wise men as fixed, immovable points, which supply motives for submission, but no incentives to exertion.

There is another class of futurities, whose existence is not ascertained by immutable, independent causes; they are placed in some measure within our reach, are subjected in a degree to our control; and are neither so certain as to produce security, nor so impossible or improbable as to occasion despair. These form the motives to human activity, and the objects of rational pursuit; in the proper selection of which, and the application of means best adapted to their attainment, consists the whole wisdom of man. The hopes and fears associated with the contemplation of events of this nature, are the springs which set mankind in motion; and while the frivolous and the dissipated fix their attention on such as are productive of transient and momentary impressions, the wise in their generation select those which are the basis of permanent interests, such as wealth, power, and reputation; which, whoever acquires by a course of strenuous exertion, is applauded, and ex-

tolled as a pattern for universal imitation. Yet what extreme short sightedness characterizes the most prosperous votary of the world, compared to the humblest candidate for immortality! "This their way is their folly, though their posterity approve their sayings." Of the great prizes in human life, it is not often the lot of the most enterprising to obtain many; they are placed on opposite sides of the path, so that it is impossible to approach one of them without proportionably receding from another; whence it arises that the wisest plans are founded on a compromise between good and evil, where much that is the object of desire is finally relinquished and abandoned, in order to secure superior advantages. The candidate for immortality is reduced to no such alternative; the possession of his object comprehends all; it combines in itself, without imperfection, and without alloy, all the scattered portions of good, for which the votaries of the world are accustomed to contend. Such also is our constitution, and so little is this sublunary state adapted to be our rest, that we are usually more alive to the good we want, than to that which we possess; that rendered delicate by indulgence, rather than satiated by enjoyment, the slightest check in the career of our desires inflicts a wound which their gratification in every other particular is incapable of healing. Thus the wretched Haman, in the highest plenitude of affluence and power, exclaimed, "All this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai sits in the gate." Such is the capricious fastidiousness of the human heart, chiefly in those who are most pampered with the gifts of fortune, that the person whom nothing has the power of gratifying long, the merest trifle is sufficient to displease, and that he is often extremely chagrined and disquieted by the absence of that whose presence would scarcely be felt. The fruition of religious objects calms and purifies, as much as it delights; it strengthens, instead of enervating the mind, which it fills without agitating, and by settling it on its proper basis, diffuses an unspeakable repose through all its powers.

As the connexion between means and ends is not so indissolubly fixed, as to preclude the possibility of disappointment, and "the battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor riches to men of understanding," the votary of the world is never secure of his object, which frequently mocks his pursuit, by vanishing at the moment when he is just on the point of seizing it. He often possesses not even the privilege of failing with impunity, and has no medium left between complete success and infallible destruction. In the struggles of ambition, in violent competitions for power or for glory, how slender the partition betwixt the widest extremes of fortune, and how few the steps, and apparently slight the circumstances which sever the throne from the prison,

the palace from the tomb. "So Tibni died," says the sacred historan with inimitable simplicity, "and Omri reigned." He who makes the care of his eternal interests his chief pursuit, is exposed to no such perils and vicissitudes. His hopes will be infallibly crowned with success. The soil on which he bestows his labor will infinitely more than recompense his care; and however disproportioned the extent and duration of his efforts to the magnitude of their object, however insufficient to secure it by their intrinsic vigor, the faithfulness of God is pledged to bring them to a prosperous issue. "Ask," said our Lord, "and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For whosoever asketh receiveth, and whosoever seeketh findeth, and whosoever knocketh, to him it shall be opened." The pursuit of salvation is the only enterprise, in which no one fails from weakness, none from an invincible ignorance of futurity, none from the sudden vicissitudes of fortune, against which there exists no effectual security, none from those occasional eclipses of knowledge and fits of inadvertence, to which the most acute and wakeful intellect is exposed. How suitable is it to the character of the Being who reveals himself by the name of *Love*, to render the object which is alone worthy of being aspired to with ardor, the only one to which all may, without presumption, aspire; and while he conceals thrones and sceptres in the shadow of his hand, and bestows them where he pleases, with a mysterious and uncontrollable sovereignty, on opening the springs of eternal felicity, to proclaim to the utmost bounds of the earth, "Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely."

But the impotence of the world never appears more conspicuous than when it has exhausted its powers in the gratification of its votaries, by placing them in a situation, which leaves them nothing further to hope. It frustrates the sanguine expectations of its admirers as much by what it bestows, as by what it withholds, and reserves its severest disappointment for the season of possession. The agitation, the uncertainty, the varied emotions of hope and fear which accompany the pursuit of worldly objects, create a vivid interest, and maintain a brisk and wholesome circulation; but when the pursuit is over, unless some other is substituted in its place, satiety succeeds to enjoyment, and pleasures cease to please. Tired of treading the same circle, of beholding the same spectacles, of frequenting the same amusements, and repeating the same follies, with nothing to awaken sensibility, or to stimulate to action, the minion of fortune is exposed to an insuperable languor; he sinks under an insupportable weight of ease, and falls a victim to incurable dejection and despondency.

Religion, by presenting objects ever interesting and ever new, by bestowing much, by promising more, and dilating the heart with the expectation of a certain *indefinite* good, clearly ascertained, though indistinctly seen; the pledge and earnest of which is far more delightful than all that irreligious men possess, is the only effectual antidote to this evil. "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst." The vanity which adheres to the world in every form, when its pleasures and occupations are regarded as *ultimate objects*, is at once corrected when they are viewed in connection with a boundless futurity; and whatever may be their intrinsic value, they rise into dignity and importance when considered as the seed of a future harvest, as the path which, however obscure, leads to honor and immortality, as the province of labor allotted us, in order to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Nothing is little which is related to such a system: nothing vain or frivolous which has the remotest influence on such prospects. Considered as a state of probation, our present condition loses all its inherent meanness; it derives a moral grandeur even from the shortness of its duration, when viewed as a contest for an immortal crown, in which the candidates are exhibited on a theatre, a spectacle to beings of the highest order, who conscious of the tremendous importance of the issue, of the magnitude of the interest at stake, survey the combatants from on high, with benevolent and trembling solicitude.

Finally, we are *made* for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness; it is our high calling and destination; and not to pursue it with diligence, is to be guilty of the blackest ingratitude to the Author of our being, as well as the greatest cruelty to ourselves. To fail of such an object, to defeat the end of our existence, and in consequence of neglecting the great salvation, to sink at last under the frown of the Almighty, is a calamity which words were not invented to express, nor finite minds formed to grasp. Eternity, it is surely not necessary to remind you, invests every state, whether of bliss or of suffering, with a mysterious and awful importance entirely its own, and is the only property in the creation which gives that weight and moment to whatever it attaches, compared to which all sublunary joys and sorrows, all interests which know a period, fade into the most contemptible insignificance. In appreciating every other object it is easy to exceed the proper estimate; and even of the distressing event which has so recently occurred, the feeling which many of us possess, is probably adequate to the occasion. The nation has certainly not been wanting in the proper expression of its poignant regret at the sudden removal of this most lamented Princess, nor of their sympathy with the royal family deprived by this visitation of its brightest or-

nament. Sorrow is painted in every countenance, the pursuits of business and of pleasure have been suspended, and the kingdom is covered with the signals of distress. But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle; or could we realize the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth; or were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?

But it is time to draw the veil over this heart-withering prospect, remembering only "what manner of persons we ought to be" who are walking on the brink of such an eternity, and possess no assurance but that the next moment will convey us to the regions of happiness or of despair. Impressed habitually with this solemn recollection, we shall "rejoice as those who rejoice not, we shall weep as those who weep not, we shall use the world as not abusing it, remembering that the end of all things is at hand."

It is scarcely to be supposed that so remarkable an example of the frailty and uncertainty of life, as the recent providence has displayed, has failed of impressing serious reflection on the minds of multitudes; it is difficult to conceive of that degree of insensibility which could totally resist such a warning. But there is reason to fear that in a great majority of instances, it has produced no salutary fruit, and will leave them after a very short period, as careless and unconcerned about a preparation for an hereafter as before; like the unthinking feathered tribe, who when one of the number falls by the hand of the fowler, are scared for a moment, and fly from the fatal spot with screams of horror, but quickly recovering their confidence, alight again on the same place, and expose themselves to the same danger. Thus many whose gaiety has been eclipsed, and whose thoughtless career of irreligion and dissipation has experienced a momentary check, will doubtless soon return with eager impetuosity, to the same course, as "the horse rusheth into the battle." The same amusements will enchant, the same society corrupt, and the same temptations ensnare them; with this very important difference, that the effort necessary to surmount the present impression, will superinduce a fresh degree of obduration, by which they will become more completely accoutred in the panoply of darkness. The next visitation, though it may be in some respects more affecting, because more near, will probably impress them less; and as death has penetrat-

ed the palace in vain, though it should even come up into their chamber and take away the delight of their eyes at a stroke, they will be less religiously moved.

What may we suppose is the reason of this? why are so many impressed, and so few profited? It is unquestionably because they are not obedient to the *first* suggestion of conscience. What that suggestion is, it may not be easy precisely to determine; but it certainly is, *not* to make haste to efface the impression by frivolous amusement, by gay society, by entertaining reading, or even by secular employment; it is probably to meditate and pray. Let the first whisper, be it what it may, of the internal monitor, be listened to as an oracle, as the still small voice which Elijah heard, when he wrapped his face in a mantle, recognizing it to be the voice of God. Be assured it will not mislead you; it will conduct you one step at least towards happiness and truth, and by a prompt and punctual compliance with it, you will be prepared to receive ampler communications and superior light. If after a serious retrospect of your past lives, of the objects you have pursued, and the principles which have determined your conduct, they appear to be such as will ill sustain the scrutiny of a dying hour, dare to be faithful to yourselves, and shun with horror that cruel treachery to your best interests, which would impel you to sacrifice the happiness of eternity to the quiet of a moment. Let the light of truth, which is the light of Heaven, however painful for the present, be admitted in its full force; and whatever secrets it may discover "in the chambers of imagery," while it unveils "still greater and greater abominations," shrink not from the view, but intreat rather the assistance of Him, whose prerogative it is to search the heart and to try the reins, to render the investigation more profound and impartial. The sight of a penitent on his knees, is a spectacle which moves Heaven; and the compassionate Redeemer, who, when he beheld Saul in that situation, exclaimed, "Behold he prayeth," will not be slow or reluctant to strengthen you by his might, and console you by his Spirit. When a "new and living way" is opened "into the holiest of all," by the blood of Jesus, not to avail ourselves of it, not to arise and go to our Father, but to prefer remaining at a guilty distance, encompassed with famine, to the rich and everlasting provisions of his house, will be a source of insupportable anguish, when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enter into the kingdom of God, and ourselves shut out. You are probably not aware of what importance it is to improve these sacred visitations; have not considered that they form a crisis, which, if often neglected, will never return. It is impossible too often to inculcate the momentous truth, that the character

is not formed by passive impressions, but by voluntary actions, and that we shall be judged hereafter, not by what we have felt, but by what we have done.

You will perceive, my brethren, that I have confined my attention in this discourse to such reflections as we would wish every individual to indulge, in the contemplation of this great national calamity, without adverting to its aspect, on the political prospects and interests of the country. The discussion of the subject in that view of it, is equally unsuited to my province, and to my talents. I leave it to politicians to investigate the effects it is likely to produce on the prosperity of the British Empire; esteeming myself sufficiently happy, if I may be the humble instrument of fixing your attention on subjects best fitted to prepare you for "a kingdom which cannot be moved;" being convinced, as you may infer from my constant practice, that this is neither the place nor the season for political discussion, and that the teachers of religion are called to a nobler occupation, than to subserve the interests of party, or fan the flames of public dissension. In perfect consistence with this observation, permit me to remark that it appears to me highly presumptuous to attempt to scan the secret purpose of the Deity, in this dispensation, by assigning it to *specific* moral causes. "His ways are in the great deep; his paths past finding out." That it ought to be considered as a signal rebuke and chastisement, designed to bring our sins to remembrance, there is no doubt; but to attempt to specify the particular crimes and delinquencies which have drawn down this visitation, is inconsistent with the modesty which ought to accompany all inquiries into the mysteries of Providence; and especially repugnant to the spirit which this most solemn and affecting event should inspire. At a time when every creature ought to tremble under the judgements of God, it ill becomes us to indulge in reciprocal recrimination; and when "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint," it is not for the members to usurp the seat of judgement, by hurling mutual accusations and reproaches against each other. Are there not sufficient provocations to be found in all ranks and classes, from the lowest to the highest, to justify and account for these and still greater severities; or is it necessary to look farther for a vindication of the equity of the divine proceeding, than in the open impiety and profaneness, the perjury and injustice, the profanation of the Sabbath, and contempt of sacred things, the profligacy of the lower, and the irreligion and impurity of the higher orders, which, notwithstanding the multitude of splendid exceptions, still form the national character.

That we are a people severely scourged and corrected, none will deny; but that we have "turned to him that smiteth us," it

would be presumption to assert. Yet if any people were ever more forcibly reminded of the interposition of Providence than another, it is certain we are that people; having been conducted through the most intricate and mysterious paths, in such a manner as totally to confound the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent, both in our adverse and prosperous fortunes. Preserved amidst the wreck of nations, and the hurricane of revolution, which swept for twenty years over the face of Europe, with ruin and desolation in its train, we have not only been permitted to maintain our soil unviolated, and our independence unimpaired; but have come forth from a contest of unparalleled difficulty and extent, with a more splendid reputation, and in a more commanding attitude, than we possessed at any former period. Our successes, both by sea and land, have been so brilliant and decisive, that it is not easy to determine whether we have acquired most glory as a military or a maritime power; while our achievements, on each element, have been such, as to distance all competition. A profound peace has at length succeeded to a scene of hostilities, which for the fourth part of a century covered the earth with armies, shook every kingdom to its basis, and ravaged and depopulated the fairest portion of the globe. But what has been the issue? We have retired from the combat, successful indeed beyond our most sanguine expectations, but bleeding, breathless, exhausted; with symptoms of internal weakness and decay, from which if we ever entirely recover, it must be when the present generation has disappeared from the earth. When was it ever known before, that peace was more destructive than war, that a people were more impoverished by their victories than their defeats, and that the epoch of their glory was the epoch of their sufferings? Peace, instead of being the nurse of industry, and the harbinger of plenty, as the experience of ages had taught us to expect, has brought poverty, discontent and distress in her train; inflicting all the privations of a state of hostility, without its hopes; and all the miseries of war, without its splendor? What but an Omnipotent hand could have infused such venom into the greatest of blessings, as utterly to transform its nature, and cause it to produce some of the worst effects of a curse?

While we were engaged in the fearful struggle which has at length been so successfully terminated, it pleased the great Ruler of nations to visit our aged, beloved and revered Monarch, with one of the most dreadful calamities incident to human nature; the pressure of which still continues, we fear, with unabated severity. While we are deeply moved at the awful spectacle of majesty laboring under a permanent and hopeless eclipse, we are consoled with the reflection that he walked in the light, while he pos-

sessed the light ; that as long as the exercise of reason was continued, he communed with eternal truth ; and that from the shades which now envelope him, he will at no very distant period, emerge into the brightness of celestial vision.

Though it may be difficult to conceive of a series of events more likely to awe the mind to a sense of the power and presence of the Deity, than those we have witnessed, he has thought fit to address us once more, if not in louder, yet in more solemn and affecting accents. An unexampled depopulation of the species by the sword, had indeed already rendered death the most familiar of all spectacles, and left few families unbereaved ; but neither the narrative of battles, nor the sight of carnage, are best suited to inculcate the lessons of mortality ; nor are the moral features of that last enemy ever less distinctly discerned, than in the moments when he is most busy ; nor on those fields of slaughter, where he appears the principal agent. The "pomp and circumstance of war," the tumultuous emotions of the combatants, and the eager anxiety of the contending parties, attentive to the important political consequences attached to victory and defeat, absorb every other impression, and obstruct the entrance of serious and pensive reflection.

How different the example of mortality presented on the present occasion ! Without the slightest warning, without the opportunity of a moment's immediate preparation, in the midst of the deepest tranquillity, at midnight, a voice was heard in the palace, not of singing men and singing women, not of revelry and mirth, but the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." The mother, in the bloom of youth, spared just long enough to hear the tidings of her infant's death, almost immediately, as if summoned by his spirit, follows him into eternity. "It is a night much to be remembered." Who foretold this event, who conjectured it, who detected at a distance the faintest presage of its approach, which when it arrived, mocked the efforts of human skill, as much by their incapacity to prevent, as their inability to foresee it? Unmoved by the tears of conjugal affection, unawed by the presence of grandeur, and the prerogatives of power, inexorable death hastened to execute his stern commission, leaving nothing to royalty itself, but to retire and weep. Who can fail to discern on this awful occasion, the hand of him who "bringeth princes to nothing, who maketh the judges of the earth as vanity ; who says, they shall not be planted ; yea, they shall not be sown ; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth ; and he shall blow upon them, and they shall wither and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble."

"It is better," says Solomon, "to go to the house of mourning,

than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart." While there are few who are not, at some season or other, conducted to that house, a nation enters it on the present visitation, there to learn, in the sudden extinction of the heiress of her monarchy, the vanity of all but what relates to eternity, and the absolute necessity of having our "loins girt, our lamps burning, and ourselves as those who are looking for the coming of the Bridegroom."

We presume there are none who can survey this signal interposition of Providence with indifference, or refrain from "laying it to heart." No, illustrious Princess, it will be long ere the name of Charlotte Augusta is mentioned by Britons without tears; remote posterity also, which shall peruse thy melancholy story, will "lay it to heart," and will be tempted to ask, why no milder expedient could suffice to correct our levity, and make us mindful of our latter end; while they look back with tender pity on the amiable victim, who seems to have been destined by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence to warn and edify that people by her death, which she was not permitted, to the extent of her ambition, to benefit by her life.

Should her lamented and untimely end, be the means of giving that religious impulse to the public mind, which shall turn us to righteousness, the benefits she will have conferred upon her country, in both worlds, will more than equal the glories of the most prosperous and extended reign.

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY

THE DEATH

OF THE

REV. JOHN RYLAND, D. D.

BRISTOL.

A

SERMON.

John xxi. 7.

That disciple whom Jesus loved.

It has been alleged by unbelievers, as a defect in the morality of the gospel, that it neglects to inculcate patriotism and friendship. In regard to the first of these, it seems a sufficient reply, that though an attachment to our country as such, is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament, the duties which result from the relation in which Christians stand to their rulers, are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions; and if the reciprocal duties of princes and magistrates are not enjoined with equal explicitness, (as could not be expected in writings where they are not addressed,) the design of their appointment is defined in such a manner, as leaves them at no loss to perceive, what it is they owe to the community. But where these duties are faithfully discharged by each party, the benefits derived from the social compact are so justly appreciated, and so deeply felt, that the love of country is less liable to defect than to excess. In all well-ordered polities, if we may judge from the experience of past ages, the attachment of men to their country is in danger of becoming an absorbing principle, inducing, not merely a forgetfulness of private interest, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. In the most virtuous times of the Roman republic, their country was the idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were at all times prepared to offer whole heca-

tombs of human victims; the interests of other nations were no further regarded, than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no rights, but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex. With all their talents and their grandeur, they were unprincipled oppressors, leagued in a determined conspiracy against the liberty and independence of mankind. In the eyes of an enlightened philanthropist, patriotism, pampered to such an excess, loses the name of virtue; it is the bond and cement of a guilty confederation. It was worthy of the wisdom of our great Legislator to decline the express inculcation of a principle so liable to degenerate into excess, and to content himself with prescribing the virtues which are sure to develope it, as far as is consistent with the dictates of universal benevolence.

The second part of the objection to which we have alluded, is susceptible of a similar answer. Let it be admitted, that our Lord did not formally prescribe the cultivation of friendship;—and what then? He prescribed the virtues out of which it will naturally grow; he prescribed the cultivation of benevolence, in all its diversified modes of operation. In his personal ministry, and in that of his apostles, he enjoined humility, forbearance, gentleness, kindness, and the most tender sympathy with the infirmities and distresses of our fellow-creatures; and his whole life was a perfect transcript of these virtues. But these, in the ordinary course of events, and under the usual arrangements of Providence, are the best preparation for friendship, as well as the surest guaranty for the discharge of its duties, and the observation of its rights. For such is the secret affinity of mind to mind, such the social constitution of man, that he who is imbued with these dispositions can scarcely fail, in the pilgrimage of life, to contract a friendship with one or more of his species. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, some members of it will attract more of his attention, and awaken more of his complacency, than others; where their virtues are equal, some more than ordinary congeniality of taste and temper will form a basis of preference, a motive for predilection, which, confirmed by habit and strengthened by the reciprocal exchange of gratifying attentions and kind offices, will at length ripen into friendship. A mind habitually tender easily melts into softness, and exchanges the sentiments of esteem for those of specific attachment and endearment. What is friendship in virtuous minds, but the concentration of benevolent emotions, heightened by respect and increased by exercise, on one or more objects? Friendship is not a state of feeling, whose elements are specifically different from those which

compose every other. The emotions we feel towards a friend, are the same in kind with those we experience on other occasions; but they are more complex and more exalted. It is the general sensibility to kind and social affections, more immediately directed to one or more individuals, and in consequence of its particular direction, giving birth to an order of feeling more vivid and intense than usual, which constitutes friendship. Hence we perceive the impropriety of making it the subject of legislation. It is the duty of every man to cultivate the dispositions which lead to friendship—the love of his species, admiration of virtue, regard to the feelings of others, gratitude, humility, along with the most inflexible adherence to probity and truth. Wherever these exist, friendship will be the natural result; but it will result as a felicity, rather than as a duty; and is to be placed among the rewards of virtue, rather than its obligations. Happiness is not to be prescribed, but to be enjoyed; and such is the benevolent arrangement of Divine Providence, that wherever there is a moral preparation for it, it follows of course; and such are the pleasures and advantages derived from virtuous friendship. Its duties, supposing it to be formed, are deducible, with sufficient certainty and precision, from the light of nature and the precepts of Scripture, and none are more sacred; but in the act of forming it, the mind disdains the fetters of prescriptions, and is left to be determined by the impulse of feeling, and the operation of events.

Besides, were friendship inculcated as a matter of indispensable obligation, endless embarrassments would arise in determining at what period the relation shall commence; whether with one or with more; and at what stage, in the progress of mutual attraction, at what point, the feelings of reciprocal regard shall be deemed to reach the maturity which entitles them to the sacred name of friendship. The laws of virtue and piety are coeval with our existence, considered as reasonable and accountable creatures. Their authority is founded on immutable relations, the duties resulting from which are capable of being clearly conceived and exactly defined; but he who should undertake to prescribe to the subtle and mysterious impulses which invite susceptible minds to friendship, would find himself engaged in an attempt as hopeless, as to regulate the motions of the air, which "bloweth where it listeth."

But though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself, under the general culture of reason and religion, it is one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows, and the multiplier of our joys; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amidst the greatest crowd and pressure of

society, is doomed to solitude; and, however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power, and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend.

The sympathies even of virtuous minds, when not warmed by the breath of friendship, are too faint and cold to satisfy the social cravings of our nature; their compassion is too much dissipated by the multiplicity of its objects, and the varieties of distress, to suffer it to flow long in one channel; while the sentiments of congratulation are still more slight and superficial. A transient tear of pity, or a smile of complacency equally transient, is all we can usually bestow on the scenes of happiness or of misery which we meet with in the paths of life. But man naturally seeks for a closer union, a more permanent conjunction of interests, a more intense reciprocation of feeling; he finds the want of one or more with whom he can trust the secrets of his heart, and relieve himself by imparting the interior joys and sorrows with which every human breast is fraught. He seeks, in short, another self, a kindred spirit, whose interest in his welfare bears some proportion to his own, with whom he may lessen his cares by sympathy, and multiply his pleasures by participation.

The satisfaction derived from surveying the most beautiful scenes of nature, or the most exquisite productions of art, is so far from being complete, that it almost turns into uneasiness, when there is none with whom we can share it; nor would the most passionate admirer of eloquence or poetry consent to witness their most stupendous exertions, upon the simple condition of not being permitted to reveal his emotions. So essential an ingredient in felicity is friendship, apart from the more solid and permanent advantages it procures, and when viewed in no other light than as the organ of communication, the channel of feeling and of thought. But if joy itself is a burden which the heart can ill sustain, without inviting others to partake of it, how much more the corrosions of anxiety, the perturbations of fear, and the dejection arising from sudden and overwhelming calamity.

But it is not merely as a source of pleasure, or as a relief from pain, that virtuous friendship is to be coveted; it is at least as much recommended by its utility. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathizing friend, may be said to have doubled his mental resources; by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind, with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to

the judgement and assistance of one, who, with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities, nor heated with the passions, which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragements of virtuous and enlightened friends, afford the most powerful aid, in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty.

Wisdom, indeed, is not confined to any limited circle, much less to the very narrow one of private friendship, and sound advice may often be procured from those with whom we have contracted no ties of intimacy. But the patient attention required to comprehend and encounter all the peculiarities of the case; the persevering ardour, the persuasive sympathy, necessary to invest it with authority and to render it effectual, will be wanting; in the absence of which, the wisest counsel is a wintry and sickly beam, which plays on the surface only; it may enlighten, but will seldom penetrate or melt. The consciousness, too, of possessing a share in the esteem and affection of persons of distinguished worth, is a powerful support to every virtuous resolution; it sheds a warm and cheerful light over the paths of life; fortifies the breast against unmanly dejection, and pusillanimous fears; while the apprehension of forfeiting these advantages, presents a strong resistance to the encroachments of temptation. There are higher considerations, it is true, which ought invariably to produce the same effect; but we have no such superfluity of strength, as should induce us to decline the aid of inferior motives, when all are but barely adequate to the exigencies of our state. The recollection that we are acting under the eye of Omniscience, will lose nothing of its force, by being joined to the remembrance, that our conduct is subject to the scrutiny of friends, whose sentiments are in unison, whose influence coincides, with the voice of conscience and of God. And surely it must be no contemptible aid in the discharge of his duties, which he derives, who has invited the benevolent inspection of his actions, the honest reprehension of his errors, and the warm encouragement of his virtues; who, accustomed to lay open the interior of his character, and the most retired secrets of his heart, finds, in the approbation of his friend, the suffrage of his conscience reflected and confirmed; who, delighted, but not elated, by the esteem he has secured and the confidence he has won, advances with renovated vigor in the paths that lead to glory, honor, and immortality. The pleasures resulting from the mutual attachment of kindred spirits, are by no means confined to the moments of personal intercourse; they diffuse their odors, though more faintly, through the seasons of absence;

refreshing and exhilarating the mind by the remembrance of the past, and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed, when it is not employed; a reserve of strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets, to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

Friendship, founded on the principles of worldly morality, recognized by virtuous heathens, such as that which subsisted between Atticus and Cicero, which the last of these illustrious men has rendered immortal, is fitted to survive through all the vicissitudes of life; but it belongs only to a union founded on religion, to continue through an endless duration. The former of these stood the shock of conflicting opinions, and of a revolution that shook the world; the latter is destined to survive when the heavens are no more, and to spring fresh from the ashes of the universe. The former possessed all the stability which is possible to sublunary things; the latter partakes of the eternity of God. Friendship founded on worldly principles is *natural*, and though composed of the best elements of nature, is not exempt from its mutability and frailty; the latter is *spiritual*, and therefore unchanging and imperishable. The friendship which is founded on kindred tastes and congenial habits, apart from piety, is permitted by the benignity of Providence to embellish a world, which, with all its magnificence and beauty, will shortly pass away; that which has religion for its basis, will ere long be transplanted, in order to adorn the paradise of God.

But it is time to turn our attention to the passage selected for our present meditations; "THAT DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED." This is not the only instance in which the writer of this history designates himself under that character; whence we may with certainty infer, that the preference shown him by our Lord, above the other Apostles, was so notorious, that the mention of it, even by the person on whom it was bestowed, could occasion no offence. He had recourse to it, without doubt, from a dictate of modesty, that he might avoid the disagreeable necessity of often speaking of himself under his proper name. It is natural to feel some curiosity respecting the character of one, who was the object of so distinguished a preference. Are we to impute it to a decided superiority in intellectual and moral attainments? Perhaps not. The consideration of moral worth will always enter deeply into the motives which actuate wise and good men in their choice of friends; but it is far from constituting the only one. A certain congeniality of mind and manners, aided by the operation of adventitious circumstances, contributes a principal share towards the formation of such unions; nor is it presumption to conjecture, that, in the instance before us,

there was something in the taste and disposition of our Lord, considered as man, more in unison with those of John, than with any of the other Apostles. As every character has its peculiar mould, by which it is more or less distinguished, we may be allowed to suppose, that, in addition to the possession of unrivalled excellence in general, that of our Lord, was marked by certain discriminating features. The virtues of Elijah, which re-appeared in John the Baptist,—stern, awful, and majestic,—fitted to alarm a slumbering world by a denunciation of the wrath to come; how different the aspect they wear, from those of "the man of sorrows," who wept at the grave of Lazarus! We follow the footsteps of this greatest of prophets with a reverence bordering upon terror; while we behold, in the character of our Lord, though transcendently superior, such a meek and softened majesty, that we are not surprised that he who knew him best, delighted to designate him under the appellation of "the Lamb." The distinguishing features of our Lord's character, viewed as a perfect human being, were unquestionably humility and love; nor is it less certain, or less obvious, that these were the qualities most conspicuous in the character of the beloved disciple.

This apostle presents a striking contrast to a certain class of writers, who, by no means deficient in talent, but possessing little sensibility, afford the reader little or no insight into their character. Their conceptions and their language are cast into a certain artificial mould, which leaves scarcely any traces of individuality. The writings of John are of the most contrary description; they are replete with traits of character; the writer presents his heart in almost every page. A tender sensibility pervades his gospel, sufficient to distinguish it from either of the preceding; nor is it possible to believe, that the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus, or of the last scenes of our Saviour's life, was composed without tears. Such strokes of pathos, such touching simplicity, such minuteness of detail without puerility or redundance, characterise the history of these extraordinary events, as could only have proceeded from one who felt himself a party concerned; who, with a most intimate acquaintance with his subject, wrote still more from his heart than from his head. He is little to be envied, who can peruse these inimitable narratives without being moved; the author places us in the very midst of the scenes he describes; we listen to the discourses; we imbibe the sentiments of the principal actors; and while he says nothing of himself, he lays open the whole interior of his character. We feel ourselves introduced, not so much to the acquaintance of an inspired apostle, as to that of the most amiable of men.

The selection of his materials is such as it were natural to ex-

pect from "the disciple whom Jesus loved;" for, while the other evangelists direct their chief attention to the miracles of our Lord, John relates his sentiments and discourses. The preceding Evangelists content themselves, for the most part, with exhibiting his human history, in the record of those facts which establish the truth of his doctrine, and the divinity of his mission; John commences from an earlier date, draws back the veil of eternity, and shows us the subject of his history, subsisting before all worlds, presiding in the work of creation and providence.

It is from this Apostle we learn most fully the state of the controversy between our Lord and the unbelieving Jews; in the course of which we have continual occasion to admire the quickness and dexterity, the subtlety and profundity displayed in various discourses, which, but for him, would have been lost in oblivion. He expatiates with peculiar interest on the last interview between Christ and his disciples; where he assures them of his unalterable attachment, and exerts himself to console their grief, to reanimate their confidence, and dispel their fears, by the prospect of seeing them again, when their joy should be such as "no man should take from them." He either entirely omits, or passes rapidly over, the transactions recorded by the other evangelists; but when he approaches the scene of the crucifixion, he lingers, and dwells upon the circumstances of that awful tragedy with a minuteness and particularity of detail, as though it had never been recorded before.

In the short epistles inscribed with his name, the topic on which he chiefly insists is LOVE, which, in its sublimer form, constitutes the moral essence of the Deity, as well as the very sum and substance of true religion. His heart was in perfect unison with his subject. Written, as is supposed, at a very advanced age, the spirit they breathe is that of a father inculcating on his children the cultivation of every virtue, and especially of mutual affection, with that neglect of order and arrangement, and those reiterations and overflowings of tender importunity, which are suited to such a character. Instead of assuming an air of superiority, in his first epistle he suppresses his name; and in the two last takes to himself a title common to every Christian pastor. He is not satisfied with styling his converts children; he styles them little children. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols;" which reminds me of a beautiful anecdote, related by Eusebius, that when he was too much oppressed with infirmity to permit him to exercise his public ministry any longer, he was accustomed to be carried into the church; and after stretching forth his feeble arms, and crying "Little children, love one another," to retire from the assembly. So deeply was he imbued with the seraphic love of the bosom on

which he leaned, that it remained unimpaired, amidst the decays of nature, and the eclipse of intellect.

In the early part of his life, if we may judge from a single incident, from his proposing to call down fire from heaven to avenge the insult offered to our Lord, he possessed an impetuous and eager spirit, not always restrained by "the wisdom that is from above;" but in maturer years it appears to have subsided, and given place to none but benign affections. His meekness and tenderness, however, were never indulged at the expense of truth, his adherence to which was inviolable; nor did he fail to express the utmost abhorrence at any attempt to corrupt it; insomuch that I can easily believe an anecdote related by Eusebius, that, on his entering a public bath, and finding the notorious heresiarch Cerinthus there, he left it with precipitation, exclaiming, "Let us flee from this place, lest it fall and crush that enemy of God!" His benevolence spent itself, not in a hollow and unmeaning complaisance to the impugners of the gospel, but in efforts to convert them; and just in proportion as he loved his fellow-creatures, was his anxiety to preserve, unimpaired and unmixed, the doctrine by which they were to be saved.

But enough has been said on the character of this eminent Apostle. Before we dismiss this branch of our subject, it will be proper to advert to a few indications of the preference with which he was honored. On perusing the Evangelists, it appears that he was invariably selected by our Lord as one of the three, who were present in the most retired scenes of his life—on the mount of transfiguration, in the house of Jairus, and in the garden of Gethsemane. Whoever else were absent, John was sure to share his most confidential moments, and to witness his most secret joys and conflicts. At the paschal supper, to which he looked forward with so much eagerness, as the appointed season for a more unreserved disclosure of his purposes than he had made before, he placed John next to himself, in such a manner, that his head naturally rested on his bosom. Through him it was that the rest of the disciples applied to our Lord to be informed who it was that should betray him. But the most decisive evidence of the preference bestowed upon John, arises from his being chosen to take care of his widowed mother after his decease. The circumstance is related with inimitable simplicity and beauty. No sooner was our Saviour elevated on the cross, than he sees his mother standing by, along with "the disciple whom he loved;" to the mother he said, "Behold thy son;" to John, "Behold thy mother;" and from that moment John took her to his own house. What a rebuke to that proud and false philosophy, which pretends to extinguish the feelings of nature, and to erect its trophies on the ruins

of humanity. By committing to the beloved disciple so precious a deposit, he gave him a stronger demonstration of his esteem, than by a whole volume of panegyric.

After the resurrection and ascension, he continued to receive from his Saviour similar proofs of his preference. Preserved amidst a violent and bloody persecution, he was permitted (such is the universal tradition of the church) to survive the rest of the Apostles, to witness in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of its inhabitants, the fulfilment of his own predictions, and, finally, to close a life extended to an extreme old age, in peace, and in the bosom of his friends. Nor was this the only distinction he enjoyed. To him it was given to convey to the churches of Asia, among whom he dwelt, repeated messages from his ascended Lord, to behold his glory, and to catch the last accents of inspiration. To him it was given, not only to record the life of the Saviour, in common with the other Evangelists; but to transmit to future ages the principal events and vicissitudes which shall befall the church to the end of time, in a series of visions, which revived the spirit and manner, and more than equalled the sublimity of the ancient prophets. Endowed with a genius equally simple and sublime, he mingles with ease among the worshippers before the throne, communes with beings of the highest order, and surveys the splendors of the celestial temple with an eye that never blenched. The place which he occupies in the order and succession of inspired men, must at the same time insure to him a high distinction; for, while Moses leads the way, John brings up the rear of that illustrious company.

To the selection of the passage to which your attention is directed, I was led by an irresistible impulse the moment I heard of the melancholy event which has deprived you of your beloved pastor. It appeared to me peculiarly applicable to his character; nor am I apprehensive of encountering contradiction, when I affirm, that among his numerous acquaintance, an entire unanimity will be felt on this subject. It will be readily confessed, that his piety was of the same mould and complexion with that which distinguished the beloved disciple. In the attempt I shall make to delineate his character, let me not be suspected of the presumption of attempting to impart any information to *you*, on whose minds his virtues have made that indelible impression which is far above the power of words. It is solely for the use of those who were placed beyond the influence of his example and the benefit of his instructions, that it appears to me not improper to exhibit some of the more conspicuous features which contributed to render him so eminent a pattern of Christian excellence.

It is a homage due to departed worth, whenever it rises to such

a height as to render its possessor an object of general attention, to endeavor to rescue it from oblivion; that when it is removed from the observation of men, it may still live in their memory, and transmit through the shades of the sepulchre some reflection, however faint, of its living lustre. By enlarging the cloud of witnesses by which we are encompassed, it is calculated to give a fresh impulse to the desire of imitation, and even the despair of reaching it is not without its use, by checking the levity, and correcting the pride and presumption of the human heart.

Dr. Ryland was born, A. D. 1753, January 29, at Warwick, where his venerable father exercised his ministry for some years; from whence he removed to Northampton.

The most remarkable particular recorded of his infancy, is his early progress in the Hebrew language, which was such, that he read a chapter of the Hebrew Bible to the celebrated Hervey before he was five years old. About his thirteenth year, he became deeply impressed with religious concern; and without any thing very singular in his experience, his convictions ripened into genuine conversion, and he was baptized on a profession of his faith in his fourteenth year. At the request of the church, he began to exercise his ministerial gifts in his seventeenth year; and after continuing to assist his father for some years, he was ordained co-pastor with him in the year 1781. In this situation he remained for some time; when, on his father's removal from Northampton, he become sole pastor, until the year 1793, when he received an unanimous invitation to the joint offices of President of the Bristol Education Society, and Pastor of Broadmead. How he conducted himself in the first scene of his labors, many living witnesses can attest; suffice it to say, that his ministry during that period was eminently acceptable and useful. During his residence at Northampton, he was "in labors more abundant;" far from confining his ministry to a single spot, he diffused its benefits over a wide circle, preaching much in the surrounding villages; and though, on his removal to Bristol, his numerous avocations rendered his ministerial exertions less frequent, he may justly be considered, on the whole, as one of the most laborious of pastors. He preached, during his whole career, not less than eight thousand six hundred and ninety-one sermons, and at two hundred and eighty-six distinct places.

If, as a preacher, he never attained the highest summit of popularity, he was always heard with attention. His ministry was replete with instruction, and not unfrequently accompanied with an unction which rendered it irresistible. As he possessed none of those graces of elocution and manner which secure superficial applause, he was always most esteemed by those who heard him the

oftenest; and his stated hearers rarely if ever wished to exchange the voice of their pastor for that of a stranger. His address was such as produced an instantaneous conviction of his sincerity. It displayed, even to the most superficial observer, a mind infinitely above being actuated by the lust of applause; a spirit deeply imbued with a sense of eternal realities, and ready to pour itself forth as a libation on the sacrifice of the faith and obedience of his converts. The effect of his discourses, excellent as they were in themselves, was prodigiously heightened by the veneration universally felt for his character, and the just and high estimation entertained of his piety. Piety, indeed, was his distinguished characteristic, which he possessed to a degree that raised him inconceivably above the level of ordinary Christians. Devotion appeared to be the principal element of his being; it was next to impossible to converse with him without perceiving how entirely it pervaded his mind, and imparted to his whole deportment an air of purity, innocence and sanctity, difficult for words to express. His piety did not display itself in a profusion of religious discourse, nor in frequently alluding to the interior exercises of his mind on spiritual subjects. He was seldom known to speak of his religious joys or sorrows; his devotional feelings were too deep and too sacred to suffer themselves to evaporate in ordinary conversation. His religion appeared in its fruits; in gentleness, humility, and benevolence: in a steady, conscientious performance of every duty; and a careful abstinence from every appearance of evil. As little did his character partake of the ascetic. It never entered into his thoughts that religion was an enemy to the innocent pleasures and social endearments of human life, of which he entertained a high relish, and which his constant regard to the Deity rendered subservient to piety, by the gratitude which they inspired, and the conviction which they deepened of the divine benignity. His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity; it was an awful love, such as the beatific vision may be supposed to inspire, where the worshippers veil their faces in that presence in which they rejoice with ecstatic joy. As he cherished a firm persuasion that the attributes of the Deity ensure the production of the greatest possible sum of good, in comparison of which, the quantity of natural and moral evil permitted to remain, vanishes and disappears, his views of the divine administration were a source of unmingled joy; while his profound sense of the essential holiness and justice of the Supreme Ruler kept alive those sentiments of penitence and humility, to which too many *optimists* are strangers. "He feared the great and terrible name of the Lord his God."

Humility was, in fact, the most remarkable feature of his char-

acter. It was depicted on his countenance, his manners, his language; it pervaded almost every thing he said or did. He might most truly be said, in the language of Scripture, to be "clothed" with it. The mode in which it operated was at the utmost remove from the shallow expedients adopted by those who vainly attempt to secure the praise of that quality, without possessing it. It neither prompted him to depreciate his talents, nor to disclaim his virtues; to speak in debasing terms of himself, nor to exaggerate his imperfections and failings. It taught him the rarer art of forgetting himself. His readiness to take the lowest place, could only be exceeded by the eagerness of all who knew him to assign him the highest; and this was the only competition which the distinctions of life ever cost him. His modesty was such, that the praises he was most solicitous to merit he blushed to receive; and never appeared so disconcerted and embarrassed, as when he was necessitated to hear his own commendations. Hence it will be easily inferred, that he was completely exempt from the jealousy of superior talent or reputation; that it gave him not a moment's uneasiness to find himself eclipsed, and that he was the ardent admirer and panegyrist of the mental endowments in which he was most deficient. Though he had neglected to cultivate the powers of his imagination, and was little distinguished for the graces of style, no one was ever more disposed to admire them wherever they were conspicuous. The candor and benignity of his mind prepared him to embrace every kind of intellectual superiority, to rejoice in every display of talent, devoted to the interest of religion; and to derive exquisite gratification from the operation of those qualities and powers to which he made the least pretensions. His enjoyment of intellectual repast was not impaired by the consciousness of not having contributed to furnish it; and his virtue was thus its own reward, by enabling him to reap the harvest, where he neither sowed the seed, nor prepared the soil.

If any man ever practised the gentleness of Jesus Christ, it was certainly our lamented friend. Possessed of a temper naturally quick and irritable, he had, by the aid of reason and religion, so far subdued that propensity, that it was rarely suffered to appear; and when it did, it was a momentary agitation, which quickly subsided into kindness and benignity. His sensibility was exquisite. There was a numerous class of subjects to which he could rarely advert without tears. The bare recurrence to his mind of the great objects of religion, was sufficient to produce a gush of tenderness; so entirely was his heart softened, that it might be truly styled "a heart of flesh." Nor was his sensibility confined to religion. It pervaded the whole system of his life, producing a quick and powerful sympathy, not only with his own

species, but with the whole circle of animated nature, the properties of which he took great delight in investigating, and in tracing the exquisite contrivance of its benevolent Author for its preservation and enjoyment.

His extreme susceptibility of feeling, combined with his gentleness and timidity, necessarily exposed him to be wounded whenever he encountered harsh and unfeeling manners; and from the same cause, he was liable to be hurt by every symptom of unkindness, even where none was intended. His sensitive mind was impressed with every variety of temper in those with whom he conversed; and if his peace was less frequently invaded from this quarter than might have been expected, it is to be ascribed to that reverence which his character so universally inspired. It seemed a sort of sacrilege to trespass upon so much innocence and piety.

And here I cannot but remark, that though religion in its ordinary mode of exhibition commands but little respect, when it rises to the sublime, and is perceived to tincture and pervade the whole character, it seldom fails to draw forth the homage of mankind. The most hardened impiety and daring profligacy will find it difficult to despise the man who manifestly appears to walk with God, whose whole system of life is evidently influenced and directed by the powers of the world to come. The ridicule cast on religious characters, is not always directed towards their religion, but more often perhaps to the little it performs, contrasted with the loftiness of its pretensions—a ridicule which derives its force from the very sublimity of the principles which the profession of piety assumes. It may be doubted whether the character of Dr. Ryland provoked, on any occasion, the sneer of the infidel, or the scorn of the ungodly.

The opportunities of making great sacrifices for the good of mankind, are of rare occurrence; and he who remains inactive till it is in his power to confer signal benefits, or yield important services, is in imminent danger of incurring the doom of the slothful servant. It is the preference of duty to inclination in the ordinary course of life, it is the practice of self-denial in a thousand little instances, which forms, the truest test of character, and secures the honor and the reward of those who "live not to themselves." Viewed in this light, our lamented friend presented a pattern of Christian virtue, rarely, if ever surpassed. His whole life was a series of acts of self-denial; his conduct appeared invariably to proceed from the impulse of benevolence and the sense of duty; and though not exempt from the errors and imperfections incident to the present state, his "eye was always single," his intentions always upright. If the essence of Christian perfection consists in a

sole and supreme desire to do the will of God, he probably made as near an approach to it, as is attainable in the present state, though he not only never pretended to it, but held all such pretensions in abhorrence.

Justice to his memory will not permit me to suppress the mention of that strict and inviolable regard to truth which he preserved in all his words and actions. He would never allow himself to employ those exaggerations and colors in the narration of facts, which many who would shudder at a deliberate falsehood freely indulge, some for the gratification of their passions, or the advancement of their interest, and others purely from the impulse of vanity, and a wish to render their narratives more striking and their conversation more poignant. Whatever Dr. Ryland affirmed was, as far as his knowledge extended, as certain as an identical proposition; nor was he satisfied with the substantial truth of what he asserted; he was so anxious that the impression he conveyed should exactly coincide, as well in its degree, as in kind, with his internal conviction, that, if it be possible, he was too tenacious of truth, and may be said to have carried his scrupulosity too far. I have often been amused at observing the compass he would fetch, and the circumlocutions he would have recourse to, in the narration of facts, rather than incur the possibility of misrepresentation or mistake.

Few men have exhibited more unequivocal proofs of candor than your excellent and lamented pastor. Though a Calvinist in the strictest sense of the word, and attached to its pecularities in a higher degree than most of the advocates of that system, he extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views. No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him; an abhorrence of error, with the kindest feelings towards the erroneous. He detested the spirit of monopoly in religion, and opposed every tendency to circumscribe it by the limits of party. His treatise on baptism furnishes a beautiful specimen of the manner in which religious controversy should be conducted, on a subject on which the combatants on both sides have frequently disgraced themselves by an acrimony and bitterness, in an inverse proportion to the importance of the point in debate. How extraordinary is it, that they who differ only on one subject, and that confessedly of secondary moment, should have contended with more fierceness than has usually been displayed in a contest *pro aris et focis*, for all that is dear and important in Christianity! Is it that their near approach as religious denominations, exposes

them more to the spirit of rivalry, as adjoining kingdoms are the most hostile to each other; or that it is the property of bigotry to acquire an additional degree of malignity by being concentrated on one point, and directed to one object? Whatever the cause may be, the fact is singular, and greatly to be lamented. He whose removal from us we so deeply regret, was too thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Christ, to expose him to that snare; his love of good men of every nation, sect, and party, was fervent and disinterested, nor was it confined to the bounds of his personal knowledge; it engaged him in a most affectionate and extensive correspondence with eminent persons in remote quarters of the globe, whose faces he never saw; so signally was he prepared for sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, where the whole assembly of the church of the first-born will be convened before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In addition to his other excellencies, none who were honored with his intimacy, will fail to recollect his diligence in the improvement of time, of the value of which he entertained too deep a sense to allow any part of it to run to waste. By the practice of early rising, and a most exact distribution of his hours to their respective employments, he contrived to husband a treasure which no one is permitted to squander without severely repenting it, though that repentance may possibly arrive too late. Employing every day as if it were the last, and subjecting every portion of time to a religious regulation, he "worked out his salvation with fear and trembling." From taste, as well as from principle, he was warmly attached to order and method, which he extended to the minutest particulars. Thus the transactions of his whole life lay before him, by looking back on the turns and vicissitudes of which, he was accumulating fresh materials for gratitude, and acquiring new lessons of prudence and piety.

That with all this varied excellence he united some imperfections, will be readily allowed; at the same time it is but justice to remark, that they were in the strictest sense of the word *imperfections*, since they grew out of his natural temperament, and were not to be imputed to an obliquity of will, or to a deficiency in the strength of his moral principle. The most conspicuous of these was a certain timidity of spirit, a proneness to augur danger where none existed, which, from an excessive apprehension of doing evil, sometimes arrested his power of doing good. His caution was extreme; and his natural aversion to bold and hazardous measures, on some occasions, enervated his resolutions, and crippled his efforts. Alive to the possible inconvenience resulting from an unnecessary disclosure of his views, he narrowed his confidence

too much, lost the advantage of that assistance and co-operation which he might easily have commanded, and in some of the most trying exigencies of his life, doomed himself to walk alone. It must be also acknowledged by his warmest admirers, that he was deficient in the spirit of authority; that he wanted the power of asserting his rights, of repressing the encroachments of petulance, and of sustaining his pretensions to rule. The extreme gentleness of his character was such, that it left him too much to the mercy of those, who were conscious they might abuse it without danger of incurring his resentment. He not only carried with him no *offensive*, but he had no *defensive* armor. This want of force and energy of character, which was his chief imperfection, was not, there is reason to believe, entirely natural, but to be ascribed, in a great measure, to an injudicious mode of treatment in early life, and to some severe trials in the commencement of his career, which pressed with such force on his mind that it never entirely recovered its elasticity. He witnessed in his excellent father, an excess of vehemence, a careless intrepidity of temper, that, with the most upright intentions, involved him in so much distress, that his anxiety to avoid that extreme betrayed him into a contrary one. The grand maxim which he seems to have adopted for the regulation of his life, was a determination to shun every approach to what he had seen productive of so much inconvenience, forgetting, perhaps, too much, that the opposite to that which is wrong, is not always right. Hence the fear of consequences predominated too much in his course of action, and he was more easily deterred by the apprehension of possible evil, than incited to action by the prospect of good. In the words of an ingenious writer, employed on a different occasion, "there was nothing he needed to be cautioned against, so much as caution itself."*

I am aware there are those who have charged our excellent friend with a want of openness of character. As far as such an imputation has any colour of truth, it is but just to remark, that the deficiency complained of, was in no degree tinctured with dissimulation or cunning. It was partly the effect of that timidity which he was acknowledged to possess, partly of that gentleness which shrunk with an instinctive recoil from contention, and which disposed him, however his feelings might be wounded, to breathe out his complaints in the ear of friendship, rather than demand such an explanation or apology as might have restored confidence, and prevented a repetition of the offence. He repressed his anger,

* See Morris's "Life of Fuller," a work which contains a most able and accurate delineation of the character of that extraordinary man.

but indulged his grief, and was accustomed, on such occasions, to conduct himself rather like a person wounded than offended. Thus the uneasy sensations with which his mind was fraught, were allowed to accumulate, producing, not malignity indeed, or rancour, of which he was incapable, but permanent disgust. "Be ye angry," saith the scripture, "and sin not." A violent suppression of the natural feelings is not the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects; and though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotions of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive, is, perhaps, best evaporated by its natural and temperate expression; not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature for the repression of injury, and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society.

Such, and such only, as it appears to me, was the origin of that reserve, which forms the most plausible objection to his character, and which, when closely investigated, will be considered more as an infelicity than a fault. That it contributed to render him less influential, less powerful, and totally disqualified him to be the head of a party, will be readily admitted; but it may be doubted whether it rendered him much less amiable. The worst effect of it was, that it sometimes imparted to his conduct the semblance of disingenuous concealment, while he was in reality an example of artless simplicity. For the liberty I have assumed of alluding to the imperfections of our lamented friend, my only apology is, that unqualified praise is entitled to little credit, and that the failings which attach to the character of the best of men are often as instructive as their virtues.

It may be expected that something should be said of his literary character and attainments, a circumstance not to be neglected, in speaking of the president of a theological institute. My knowledge, however, on this head, is too limited to allow me to say more, than that he was a scholar from his infancy, that his attainments in the Hebrew language were profound, that he had a general acquaintance with the principles of science, and that his reading was various and extensive. As he was extremely addicted to study and meditation, so his mental opulence was much greater than his modesty would permit him to reveal; his disposition to conceal his attainments being nearly as strong as that of some men to display them.

He had a passion for natural history, in the pursuit of which he was much assisted by the peculiar structure of his eyes, which were a kind of natural microscopes. The observations he made on various natural productions, without the aid of instruments, were really surprising; and though the peculiarity in his visual organs deprived him of the pleasure of contemplating the sublime and

magnificent features of nature, it gave him a singular advantage for tracing her minuter operations.

But the science in which he most delighted, and to which he bent the full force of his mind, was theology; not that theology which is built on human speculation, and supported by scholastic subtleties, but that knowledge of God, and of the mysteries of his will, which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. By the incessant study of the Scriptures, your pastor became a "scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of God, and, like a wise householder, was enabled to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old." The system of divinity to which he adhered was moderate Calvinism, as modelled and explained by that prodigy of metaphysical acumen, the celebrated Jonathan Edwards. For the writings of this great man, and those of his followers, he formed a warm predilection very early, which continued ever after to exert a powerful influence on his public ministry, as well as his theological inquiries and pursuits. It inspired him with the most elevated conceptions of the moral character of the Deity, to the display of which, it taught him to refer the whole economy of providence and of grace; while he inculcated the indispensable duty of loving God, not merely for the benefits he bestows, but for what he is in himself, as essential to true religion. Hence, he held in abhorrence those pretended religious affections which have their origin and termination in *self*. Whether he attached an undue importance to these speculations, and rendered them occasionally too prominent in his public ministrations, it is not for me to determine; it is certain that they effectually secured him from the slightest tendency to Antinomianism, and contributed not a little to give purity and elevation to his religious views. The two extremes against which, you are well aware, he was most solicitous to guard the religious public, were, Pelagian pride and Antinomian licentiousness; the first of which he detested as an insult on the grace of the gospel; the last, on the majesty and authority of the law.

By the removal of a minister of Christ, so able, so disinterested, so devoted, you have sustained a loss, the magnitude of which it is difficult to appreciate, much more to repair. A successor you may easily procure; but where will you find one who will so "naturally care for your state?" who, "instant in season and out of season, is willing to impart to you not only the gospel, but his own soul also, because ye are dear unto him?" You may hear the same truths from other lips, supported by illustrations and arguments equally clear and cogent; the same duties inculcated by similar motives; but where will you find them enforced and recommended by an example equally elevated, an affection equally

tender? Where will you look for another, whose whole life is a luminous commentary on his doctrine, and who can invite you to no heights of piety, but what you are conscious he has himself attained? When you add to this the effect of a residence among you of above thirty years, during which he became the confidential friend of your parents, the guide of your youth, and after witnessing the removal of one generation to a better world, was the honored instrument of raising up another in their room; when you reflect on the continued emanations of wisdom and piety which proceeded for so long a space from this burning and shining light, you must be convinced that your loss is irreparable.

The removal of such a pastor, of one whose labors you have so long enjoyed, is an epoch in the history of a church. It is an event which no living generation can witness more than once; and it surely calls upon you to consider what improvement you have made of such advantages, and what is the prospect that awaits you, in the final day of account, when you and your pastor shall meet once more in the presence of the Judge; he to give an account of his ministry, you of its effect on your character. In relation to him, the event is not doubtful. "He has finished his course; he has kept the faith; henceforth there remains for him a crown of righteousness, which Christ the righteous Judge will give on that day." Would to God the issue were equally certain and equally happy on the part of those who so long enjoyed the benefit of such a ministry! That such will be the issue with respect to many who compose this auditory, we cannot doubt; and with what inconceivable joy will he witness the felicity which awaits them, while he presents them before the throne, saying, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." With what delight will they renew the intercourse which death had interrupted, and retrace together the steps of their mysterious pilgrimage; while the gratitude they will experience towards him who was instrumental in conducting them thither, will be only inferior to that which they will feel to God and the Lamb. How trivial will every other distinction then appear, compared to the honor of having turned many to righteousness; of having sown that seed which shall be reaped in life everlasting. A large portion of this felicity will, we cannot doubt, accrue to your pastor, from those who are accustomed to assemble within these walls; but should it in any instance be otherwise, should the event be of a contrary nature, he "will be a sweet smelling savor to God, *even* in them that perish." His happiness will be unimpaired, his reward undiminished, and the feelings with which he was wont to contemplate such a catastrophe will give place to sentiments of a higher order. The tears which he wept over souls in danger of

perishing, will be shed no more; all his agitation and anxiety, on their account, will be laid to rest; nor will they who refused to constitute his joy by their conversion, be suffered to mar his felicity by their destruction.

It is not the church and congregation only, over which he presided with so much honor, that feels itself interested in this event. The sensation which it has produced is widely extended, and has reached every part of this great and populous city; a city sufficiently enlightened to comprehend his worth, and to mourn his loss. When a Reynolds, whose munificence flowed in a thousand channels, and whose example gave a new impulse to the public mind, quitted the scene which he had so long adorned with his presence, and enriched with his bounty, that a general sensation should be excited, is no more than might be expected. But that the removal of a Christian minister, who possessed none of these advantages, should produce a regret so universal and so deep, is a pleasing homage to the majesty of religion; a practical demonstration of the power it exerts over the consciences of men. If blessings are bestowed and judgements averted in answer to prayer, as the Scripture every where teaches, and the efficacy of prayer is proportioned to the fervor of faith and the perfection of obedience, it is impossible to say how much the inhabitants of this place may be indebted to our excellent friend, by whose removal they have lost a powerful intercessor with God.

By an extensive circle of ministers and churches, who shared his friendship, and on various occasions enjoyed his labors, his loss will be deeply lamented, and not without reason; for though the faithful dispensers of evangelical instruction may now be reckoned by thousands, how few are left who can sustain a comparison with him, in all the qualities which adorn the gospel, and give the possessor power with God!

That denomination of Christians, of which he was so long a distinguished ornament, will especially lay this providence to heart. Our hands are weakened this day; and if the glory is not departfrom us, it is at least eclipsed and obscured. We have been visited with stroke upon stroke. Our brightest lights have been successively extinguished; and in vain do we look around for a Beddome, a Booth, a Fuller, or a Ryland; names which would have given lustre to any denomination, and were long the glory of ours. Your pastor was endeared to us, as one of the last links of the chain which connected the present generation with the founders of the Baptist Mission. From the very beginning, he mingled his counsels and his prayers with that determined band, who, in the absence of all human resources, resolved to send the gospel to the remotest quarter of the globe; nor did he cease to his last hour

to watch over its progress with parental solicitude. The intimate friendship which subsisted between that lovely triumvirate, Fuller, Ryland, and Sutcliff, which never suffered a moment's interruption or abatement, was cemented by their common attachment to that object. Of congenial sentiments and taste, though of very different temperament and character, there was scarce a thought which they did not communicate to each other, while they united all their energies in supporting the same cause; nor is it easy to determine whether the success of our mission is most to be ascribed to the vigor of Fuller, the prudence of Sutcliff, or the piety of Ryland. Is it presumption to suppose they still turn their attention to that object; that they bend their eyes on the plains of Hindostan, and sympathize with the toils of a Carey and of his associates, content to postpone the pleasure which awaits them on his arrival; while they behold the steady though gradual progress of light, and see, at no great distance, the idol temples fallen, the vedas and shasters consigned to oblivion, the cruel rites of a degrading superstition abhorred and abandoned, and "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ?"

But by none will the removal of our excellent friend be more deeply felt than by our missionaries in India, and especially by the venerable Carey, whom he was the means of introducing into the ministry; a circumstance which he sometimes mentioned with honest triumph, after witnessing the career of that extraordinary man, who, from the lowest poverty and obscurity, without assistance, rose, by dint of unrelenting industry, to the highest honours of literature, became one of the first of orientalists, the first of missionaries, and the instrument of diffusing more religious knowledge among his contemporaries, than has fallen to the lot of any individual since the Reformation; a man who unites, with the most profound and varied attainments, the fervour of an evangelist, the piety of a saint, and the simplicity of a child. His chief consolation, on receiving the melancholy tidings, will undoubtedly arise from the prospect of soon meeting in a better world, where those who have been fellow pilgrims in this vale of tears will be associated in the presence of the Saviour, never more to part.

If the mere conception of the re-union of good men, in a future state, infused a momentary rapture into the mind of Tully; if an airy speculation, for there is reason to fear it had little hold on his convictions, could inspire him with such delight, what may we be expected to feel, who are assured of such an event by the true sayings of God! How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty, rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth; of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined

and perfected, "with every tear wiped from their eyes," standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, "in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God, that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever." What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat, and the labor of the way, and to approach, not the house, but the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphonies of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruitions of the beatific vision!

To that state all the pious on earth are tending; and if there is a law from whose operation none are exempt, which irresistibly conveys their bodies to darkness and to dust, there is another, not less certain or less powerful, which conducts their spirits to the abodes of bliss, to the bosom of their Father and their God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; every thing presses on towards eternity; from the birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile, heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine; leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence; while every thing which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world, to adorn that eternal city, "which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Let us obey the voice that calls us thither; let us seek the things that are above, and no longer cleave to a world which must shortly perish, and which we must shortly quit, while we neglect to prepare for that in which we are invited to dwell for ever. Let us follow in the track those holy men, who, together with your beloved and faithful pastor, have taught us by their voice, and encouraged us by their example, "that, laying aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets us, we may run with patience the race that is set before us." While every thing within us and around us reminds us of the approach of death, and concurs to teach us that this is not our rest, let us hasten our preparations for another world, and earnestly implore that grace, which alone can put an end to that fatal war which our desires have too long waged with our destiny. When these shall move in the same direction, and that which the will of heaven renders unavoidable shall become our choice, all things will be ours; life will be divested of its vanity, and death of its terrors. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of per-

sons ought we then to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness."

A TREATISE

ON THE

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

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The regeneration, and growth in holiness, of every Christian, are to be primarily attributed to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Without this, nothing can be done or attained, to any important purpose, in religion. Your candid attention is requested to a few hints respecting the means connected with the enjoyments of that blessed influence. The numerous cautions, warnings, and advices with which the mention of this subject is joined in the sacred writings, suffice to show that the doctrine of which it treats is a practical doctrine, not designed to supersede the use of means, or the exercise of our rational powers, but rather to stimulate us to exertion, and teach us how to exert them aright. "If ye live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption."

The Spirit, we must remember, is a most free agent, and though he will not utterly forsake the work of his hands, he may be expected to withdraw himself, in a great measure, on being slighted, neglected, or opposed; and as our holiness and comfort depend entirely upon him, it is important for us to know what deportment is calculated to invite, and what to repel, his presence.

1. If we would wish for much of the presence of God by his Spirit, we must learn to set a high value upon it. The first communication of spiritual influence, is, indeed, imparted without this requisite; for it cannot be possessed in any adequate degree except by those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. "I am found of them that sought me not." But in subsequent donations, the Lord seems very much to regulate his conduct by a rule,—

that of bestowing his richest favors where he knows they are most coveted, and will be most prized. The principle whence divine communications flow, is free unmerited benignity; but in the mode of dispensing its fruits, it is worthy of the supreme Ruler to consult his own majesty, by withholding a copious supply, till he has excited in the heart a profound estimation of his gifts.

No words are adequate to express the excellence and dignity of the gift of the divine Spirit. While Solomon was dedicating the temple, his great soul appears to have been put in rapture at the very idea that He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain should deign to dwell with man upon the earth. How much more should each of us be transported when he finds the idea realized, by his own heart having become the seat of the divine presence. There are two considerations drawn from Scripture, which assist us in forming a conception of the magnitude of this blessing.

The first is, that it is the great promise of the Christian dispensation, and stands in nearly the same relation to us, that the coming of the Messiah did to pious Jews. They waited for the consolation of Israel in the birth of Christ; and now that that event is past, we are waiting, in a similar manner, for the promise of the Spirit, of which the church has hitherto enjoyed but the first fruits. To this the Saviour, after his resurrection, pointed the expectation of his Apostles, as emphatically the promise of the Father, which they were to receive at the distance of a few days; and when it was accomplished at the day of Pentecost, we find Peter insisting on it as the most illustrious proof of his ascension, as well as the chief fruit that converts were to reap from their repentance and baptism. "Repent and be baptized," said he, "every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise (that is, the promise of the Spirit) is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Apostle Paul places it in a similar light, when he tells us, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles;" and in what that blessing consists, he informs us, by adding, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith." On this account, probably, he is styled the *Spirit of promise*, that is, the Spirit so often promised; in the communication of whom, the promises of God so centre, that it may be considered as the sum and substance of all the promises.

Another consideration, which evinces the supreme importance of this gift, is, that, in the esteem of our Lord, it was more than a compensation to his disciples for the loss of his bodily presence;

so much superior to it, that he tells them, it was expedient he should leave them in order to make way for it: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Great as the advantages were, which they derived from his society, yet they remained in a state of minority; their views were contracted, their hearts full of earthly adhesions, and a degree of carnality and prejudice attended them, which it was the office of the Spirit only to remove. From his more ample and effectual teaching, a great increase of knowledge was to accrue, to qualify them for their work of bearing witness to Christ, and a powerful energy to go forth, which was to render their ministry, though in themselves so much inferior, far more successful than the personal ministry of our Lord. In consequence of his agency, the Apostles were to become enlightened and intrepid, and the world convinced. "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth is come, he will lead you into all truth. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement." Accordingly, after his descent, we find the Apostles strangely transformed; an unction, a fervor, a boldness, marked their character, to which they had hitherto been strangers; and such conviction attended their preaching, that in a short time a great part of the world sunk under the weapons of their holy warfare. Nor is there any pretence for alleging, that this communication was confined to miraculous gifts, since it is asserted to be that Spirit which should abide in them for ever, and by which the church should be distinguished from the world. He is styled, "the Spirit of truth, whom the world could not receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him;" but it is added, "Ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you."

As we are indebted to the Spirit for the first formation of the divine life, so it is He who alone can maintain it, and render it strong and vigorous. It is his office to actuate the habits of grace, where they are already planted; to hold our souls in life, and to "strengthen us that we may walk up and down in the name of the Lord." It is his office to present the mysteries of salvation; the truths which relate to the mediation of Christ and the riches of his grace, in so penetrating and transforming a manner, as to render them vital, operating principles, the food and the solace of our spirits. Without his agency, however intrinsically excellent, they will be to us mere dead speculation, an inert mass; it is only when they are animated by his breath, that they become spirit and life.

It is his office to afford that anointing by which we may know all things; by a light which is not merely directive to the understanding, but which so shines upon the heart, as to give a relish of

the sweetness of divine truth, and effectually produce a compliance with its dictates. It belongs to him "to seal us to the day of redemption," to put that mark and character upon us, which distinguishes the children of God, as well as to afford a foretaste, as an earnest of the future inheritance. "And hereby," saith an Apostle, "we know that we are of God, by the Spirit which he hath given us." It is his office to subdue the corruption of our nature, not by leaving us inactive spectators of the combat, but by engaging us to a determined resistance to every sinful propensity, by teaching our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so that the victory shall be ours, and the praise his. To help the infirmities of saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought, by making intercession for them "with groanings which cannot be uttered," is an important branch of his office. He kindles their desires, gives them a glimpse of the fulness of God, that all-comprehending good; and by exciting a relish of the beauties of holiness, and the ineffable pleasure which springs from nearness to God, disposes them to the fervent and effectual prayer which availeth much. In short, as Christ is the way to the Father, so it is equally certain, that the Spirit is the fountain of all the light and strength which enable us to walk in that way. Lest it should be suspected that in ascribing so much to the agency of the Spirit, we diminish the obligations we owe to the Redeemer, it may not be improper to remark, that the tendency of what we have advanced, rightly understood, will be just the contrary, since the Scriptures constantly remind us, that the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of his mediation, and the result of his death. It was his interposing as "Emmanuel, God with us," to repair the breach betwixt man and God, that prevailed upon the Father to communicate the Spirit to such as believe on him, and to entrust the whole agency of it to his hands. As the reward of his sufferings, he ascended on high, and received gifts for men; of which, the right of bestowing the Spirit is the principal, that the Lord God might dwell among them. The donation, in every instance, through the successive periods of the church, looks back to the death of the Redeemer, as the root and principle whence it takes its rise, and consequently is calculated to enlarge our conceptions of his office and character, as the copiousness of the streams evinces the exuberance of the fountain. To him the Spirit was first given above measure; in him it resides as an inexhaustible spring, to be imparted in the dispensation of his gospel to every member of his mystical body, in pursuance of the purpose of his grace and the ends of his death. It is *his* Spirit; hence we read of "the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus," not only by reason of the essential union which subsists between the persons of the Godhead, but

because the right of bestowing it was ascertained to him in the covenant of redemption.

2. If we would wish to enjoy much of the light and influence of the Spirit, we must seek it by fervent prayer. There are particular encouragements held out in the word of God to this purpose. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." To illustrate the readiness of our heavenly Father to bestow this blessing, our Lord borrows a comparison from the instinct of parental affection, which prompts a parent to give with alacrity good things to his children. He will not merely supply their wants, which benevolence might prompt him to do with respect to a stranger; but he will do it with feelings peculiar to the parental relation, and will experience as much pleasure in conferring as the child in receiving, his favors. It is thus with our heavenly Father; he delights in exercising kindness to his children, and especially in promoting their spiritual welfare. He gives not merely with the liberality of a prince, but with the heart of a father. It is worth remarking, that in relating the preceding discourse, while one Evangelist makes express mention of the Spirit, another speaks only of good things, intimating that the communications of the Spirit comprehend whatever is good. Other things may, or may not, be ultimately beneficial; they are either of a doubtful nature in themselves, or are rendered so by the propensity our corruption gives us to abuse them. But the influence of the Spirit, by its efficacy in subduing that corruption, must be invariably beneficial; it is such an immediate emanation from God, the foundation of blessedness, that it can never fail of being intrinsically, essentially, and eternally good. It is also deserving our attention, that the injunction of seeking it by prayer, is prefaced by a parable constructed on purpose to teach us the propriety of urging our suit with importunity. In imploring other gifts, (which we are at liberty to do with submission), it is still a great point of duty to moderate our desires, and to be prepared for a disappointment, because, as we have already remarked, it is possible that the things we are seeking, may conduce neither to the glory of God, nor to our ultimate benefit; "for who knoweth what is good for man in this life all the days of his vain life? But when we present our requests for a larger measure of his grace, we labor under no such uncertainty, we may safely let forth all the ardor and vehemence of our spirits, since our desires are fixed upon what is the very knot and juncture, where the honor of God and the interests of his creatures are indissolubly united. Desires after grace, are, in fact, desires after God; and how is it possible for them to be too vehement or intense, when directed to such an object? His gracious presence is not like the limited goods of

this life fitted to a particular crisis, or adapted to a special exigency, in a fluctuating scene of things; it is equally suited to all times and seasons, the food of souls, the proper good of man, under every aspect of Providence and every change of worlds. "My soul," said David, "panteth after God, yea, for the living God. My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me." The most eminent effusions of the Spirit we read of in Scripture, were not only afforded to prayer, but appear to have taken place at the very time that that exercise was performed. The descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, was while the disciples were with one accord in one place; and after the imprisonment of Peter and John, who, being dismissed, went to their own company. "While they prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken with a mighty wind, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—When a new heart and a new spirit are promised in Ezekiel, it is added, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

3. Habitual dependence on divine influence is an important duty. This may be considered as opposed to two things; first, to depending on ourselves, to the neglect of divine agency; next, to despondency and distrust.

When the Holy Spirit has condescended to take the conduct of souls, it is unquestionably great presumption to enter upon duty in the same manner as if no such assistance were needed, or to be expected; and the result will be as with Samson, who said, "I will go forth and shake myself, as in time past; and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." It is one thing to acknowledge a dependence on heavenly influence in speculation, and another thing so to realize and feel it, as to say from the heart, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." A mere assent to the proposition, that the Spirit must concur in the production of every great work, (an assent not easily withheld without rejecting the Scriptures,) falls very short of the practical homage due from feeble worms to so great an agent; and a most solemn and explicit acknowledgement of entire dependence may reasonably be expected. When you engage in prayer or in any other duty, endeavor to enter upon it with a serious and deliberate recollection of your need of the Spirit. Let the consciousness of your weakness and insufficiency for every good work, be a sentiment rendered familiar to your minds, and deeply impressed on your hearts.

But while we recommend this, there is another extreme against which we think it our duty to guard you, and that is, a disposition to despondency and distrust. We are most ready to acknowledge that the assistance you need is free and gratuitous, neither given

to our deservings, nor flowing from any connexion subsisting betwixt our endeavors and the exertion of divine agency. The Spirit of God is a free spirit; and it is impossible to conceive how either faith or prayer should have an intrinsic efficacy in drawing down influence from heaven. There is, however, a connexion established by divine vouchsafement, which entitles believers to expect, in the use of means, such measures of gracious assistance as are requisite to sustain and support them in their religious course. The Spirit is spoken of as the matter of promise to which every Christian is encouraged to look: "The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Agreeably to this, it is represented as the express purpose of Christ's becoming a curse for us, that the "promise of the Spirit might come on the Gentiles through faith." The same expectation is justified by the Saviour's own declaration, when on the last and great day of the feast he stood and cried, "Whoever is athirst, let him come unto me and drink, for he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; this" (says the Evangelist,) "he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."

The readiness of the Holy Spirit to communicate himself to true believers, is also evinced by the tenor of evangelical precepts; "Be ye strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." To command a person to be strong, seems strange and unusual language, but is sufficiently explained when we reflect, that a portion of spiritual power is ready to be communicated to those who duly seek it; "Be ye filled with the Spirit," which is the exhortation of the same Apostle, takes it for granted that a copious supply is at hand, sufficient to satiate the desires of the saints. We are at a loss to account for such precepts, without supposing an established connexion betwixt the condition of believers and the farther communication of divine influence. To the same purport, Paul speaks, with apostolic authority, "This, I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;" and Jude inculcates the duty of praying in the Holy Ghost, which would be strange if no assistance were to be obtained; and as prayer is a duty of daily occurrence, the injunction implies that it is ready to be imparted to Christians, not by fits and starts, or at distant intervals, but in a stated regular course.

For this reason, when we hear Christians complaining of the habitual withdrawment of the Divine Presence, we are under the necessity of ascribing it to their own fault; not that we mean to deny there is much of sovereignty in this affair, or that "the Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth." But it should be remembered, we are now adverting to the situation of real believers,

who are entitled to the promise; and though it is probable that there is much of sovereignty exercised even with respect to *them*, we apprehend it rather concerns those influences which are consolatory than such as are sanctifying; though there is a degree of satisfaction intermingled with every exercise of genuine piety, yet it is manifest that some influences of the Spirit tend more immediately to comfort, others to purification. By some we are engaged in the fixed contemplation of objects which exist out of ourselves, the perfections of God, the excellency of Christ, the admirable constitution of the gospel, accompanied with a delightful connexion of a personal interest in whatever comes under our view; the natural food of which is "joy unspeakable and full of glory." By others we are more immediately impressed with a lasting sense of our extreme unworthiness, and made to mourn over remaining corruption, and the criminal defects inherent in our best services.

In the midst of such exercises, it is possible that hope may languish and comfort be reduced to a low ebb, yet the divine life may still be advancing and the soul growing in humility, deadness to the world, and the mortification of her own will, as the sap during winter retires to the root of the plant, ready to ascend and produce verdure and beauty on the return of spring. This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and though he delights in comforting his people at proper seasons, he is much less intent on this than on promoting their spiritual improvement, to which in this their probationary state every thing is made subservient. Let us not then confound the decay of consolation with the decay of piety; nor imagine that we can want the aids necessary to prevent the latter, unless we have forfeited them by presumption, negligence, and sloth. Whenever Christians sensibly decline in religion, they ought to charge themselves with the guilt of having grieved the Spirit; they should take the alarm, repent, and do their first works; they are suffering under the rebukes of that paternal justice which God exercises in his own family. Such a measure of gracious assistance in the use of means, being by the tenor of the new covenant *ascertained* to real Christians, as is requisite for their comfortable walk with God, to find it withheld should engage them in deep searchings of heart, and make them fear lest, "a promise being left them of entering into rest, they should appear to come short of it." But this leads us to observe, in the last place, that,

4. If we wish to enjoy the light of the Spirit, we must take care to maintain a deportment suited to the character of that Divine Agent. When the Apostle exhorts us not to grieve the Spirit of God, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption, it is forcibly implied, that he is susceptible of offence, and that to of-

fend him involves heinous ingratitude and folly; ingratitude, for what a requital is this for being sealed to the day of redemption! and folly, inasmuch as we may fitly say on this, as Paul did on a different occasion, "Who is he that maketh us glad, but the same that is made sorry by us?" Have we any other comforter when he is withdrawn? Can a single ray of light visit us in his absence, or can we be safe for a moment without his guidance and support? If the immense and infinite Spirit, by a mysterious condescension, deigns to undertake the conduct of a worm, ought it not to yield the most implicit submission? The appropriate duty owing to a faithful and experienced guide, is a ready compliance with his dictates; and how much more may this be expected, when the disparity betwixt the parties in question is no less than infinite! The language of the Holy Spirit, in describing the manners of the ancient Israelites, is awfully monitory to professors in every age; "They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them." As we wish to avoid whatever is more curious than useful, we shall not stay to inquire precisely on what occasions, or to what extent, the Spirit is capable of being resisted; it may be sufficient to observe, it is evident, from melancholy experience, that it is very possible to neglect what is the obvious tendency of his motions, which is invariably to produce universal holiness. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, gentleness, temperance, faith;" whatever is contrary to these, involves an opposition to the Spirit, and is directly calculated to quench his sacred influence.

From his descending on Christ in the form of a dove, as well as from many express declarations of Scripture, we may with certainty conclude the indulgence of all the irascible and malignant passions to be peculiarly repugnant to his nature; and it is remarkable, that the injunction of not grieving the Holy Spirit is immediately followed by a particular caution against cherishing such dispositions: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Have you not found by experience, that the indulgence of the former has destroyed that self-recollection and composure, which are so essential to devotion? Vindictive passions surround the soul with a sort of turbulent atmosphere, than which nothing can be conceived more opposite to that calm and holy light in which the blessed Spirit loves to dwell. The indulgence of sensual lusts, or of whatever enslaves the soul to the appetites of the body, in violation of the rules of sobriety and chastity, it seems almost unneces-

sary to add, must have a direct tendency to quench his sacred influences; wherever such desires prevail, they war against the soul, immerse it in carnality, and utterly indispose it to every thing spiritual and heavenly. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" it bears a resemblance to its Author in being a spiritual production, which requires to be nourished by divine meditation, by pure and holy thoughts.

If you wish to live in the fellowship of the Spirit, you must guard with no less care against the encroachments of worldly-mindedness, recollecting we are Christians just as far as our treasure and our hearts are planted in heaven, and no further. A heart overcharged with the cares of this world, is as much disqualified for converse with God, and for walking in the Spirit, as it would be by surfeiting and drunkenness; to which, by their tendency to intoxicate and stupify, they bear a great resemblance.

How many, by an immoderate attachment to wealth, and by being determined, at all events, to become rich, "have fallen into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows;" and where the result has not been so signally disastrous, a visible languor in religion has ensued, the friendship of serious Christians has been shunned, and the public ordinances of religion attended with little fruit or advantage. As it is the design of the Spirit, in his sacred visitations, to form us for an habitual converse with spiritual and eternal objects, nothing can tend more directly to counteract it, than to busy our souls in earth; it is as impossible for the eye of the mind as for that of the body, to look opposite ways at once; nor can we aim supremely at "the things which are seen and temporal," but by losing sight of those "which are unseen and eternal."

But though a general attention to the duties of piety and virtue, and a careful avoidance of the sins opposed to these, are certainly included in a becoming deportment to the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is not *all* that is included. The children of God are characterized in Scripture by their being "led by the Spirit;" *led*, evidently not impelled, nor driven forward in an headlong course, without choice or design; but being, by the constitution of their nature, rational and intelligent, and by the influence of grace, rendered spiritual, they are disposed to obey at a touch, and to comply with the gentler insinuations of divine grace; they are ready to take that precise impression which corresponds with the mind and purpose of the Spirit. You are aware of what consequence it is in worldly concerns to embrace opportunities, and to improve critical seasons; and thus, in the things of the Spirit, there are times peculiarly favorable, moments of happy visitation, where much more may be done towards the advancement of our spiritual inter-

est than usual.—There are gales of the Spirit, unexpected influences of light and of power, which no assiduity in the means of grace can command, but which it is a great point of wisdom to improve. If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather, and the face of the sky, that he may be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine, and every falling shower, how much more alert and attentive should we be, in watching for those influences from above, which are necessary to ripen and mature a far more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another, is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can meet his wishes, before they are verbally expressed; something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit. "The *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him." Psalm xxv. 14.

The design of his operation is in one view invariably the same —the production of holiness; but the branches of which that consists, and the exercises of mind which are rendered subservient to it, are various, and he who is intent on walking in the Spirit, will be careful to fall in with that train of thought, and cherish that cast of reflection, to which he is especially invited. For want of more docility in this respect, it is probable, we have often sustained loss. Permit us here to suggest two or three heads of inquiry. You have sometimes felt a peculiar seriousness of mind; the delusive glare of worldly objects has faded away, or become dim before your eyes, and death and eternity, appearing at the door, have filled the whole field of vision. Have you improved such seasons for fixing those maxims and establishing those practical conclusions which may produce an habitual sobriety of mind, when things appear under a different aspect? You have sometimes found instead of a reluctance to pray, a powerful impulse to that exercise, so that you felt as if you could do nothing else. Have you always complied with these motions, and suffered nothing but the claims of absolute necessity to divert you from pouring out your hearts at a throne of grace? The Spirit is said to make intercession for saints, with groanings which cannot be uttered; when you have felt those ineffable longings after God, have you indulged them to the utmost? Have you spread every sail, launched forth into the deep of the divine perfections and promises, and possessed yourselves as much as possible of the fullness of God? There are moments when the conscience of a good man is more tender, has a nicer and more discriminating touch, than usual; the evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, appears in a more pure and piercing light. Have you availed yourselves of such seasons as these for searching into "the chambers of image-

ry," and while you detected greater and greater abominations, been at pains to bring them out, and to slay them before the Lord? Have such visitations effected something towards the mortification of sin? Or have they been suffered to expire in mere ineffectual resolutions? The fruits which godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians are thus beautifully portrayed: "What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what revenge!" There are moments in the experience of a good man, when he feels a more than ordinary softness of mind; the frost of selfishness dissolves, and his heart flows forth in love to God and his fellow creatures. How careful should we be to cherish such a frame, and to embrace the opportunity of subduing resentments, and of healing those scars and wounds which it is scarcely possible to avoid in passing through this unquiet world!

There is a holy skill in turning the several parts of Christian experience to account, analogous to what the votaries of the world display in the improvement of every conjuncture from which it is possible to derive emolument; and though the end they propose is mean and contemptible, the steadiness with which they pursue it, and their dexterity in the choice of means, deserve imitation. In these respects "they are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Do not allow yourselves to indulge in religious sloth, or to give way to the solicitations of the tempter, from a confidence in the safety of your state, or in your spiritual immunities as Christians. —The habitual prevalence of such a disposition will afford a much stronger proof of insincerity than any arguments which can be adduced for the contrary; and admitting your pretensions to piety to be ever so valid, a little reflection may convince you, that a careless and negligent course will lay you open to the severest rebukes. "You only have I known," (says the Lord by the prophet) "of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities."

Remember, dear brethren! we profess a peculiar relation to God as his children, his witnesses, his people, his temple; the character of that glorious Being and of his religion will be contemplated by the world, chiefly through the medium of our spirit and conduct, which ought to display, as in a mirror, the virtues of Him who "hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. It is strictly appropriate to the subject of our present meditations, to remind you that you are "temples." "For ye," says the Apostle, "are the temples of the living God, as God hath said. I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." What purity, sanctity, and digni-

ty, may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A Christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted, so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others, in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others, is in him the profanation of a temple. Let us, dear brethren! watch and pray, that nothing may be allowed a place in our hearts, that is not suitable to the residence of the holy and blessed God. Finally, "having such great and precious promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

Having thus endeavored to lay before you the most likely methods of obtaining the communications of the Spirit, as well as to shew the great importance of this gift, we might now dismiss the subject, were we not desirous of first guarding you against a dangerous mistake. The mistake to which we refer, is that of taking conviction for conversion, certain impressions of the guilt and danger of sin made upon the conscience, for the saving operations of the Spirit. These convictions are important; it is highly desirable and necessary to have a settled persuasion of the established connexion betwixt sin and punishment, and, as a natural consequence, to feel uneasiness and alarm, in proportion as we have reason to believe our sins are yet unpardoned. Until we see ourselves *lost*, we shall never truly come to Christ for salvation. Until we feel our malady, and dread its consequences, we shall never have recourse to the Physician, or be willing to comply with his prescription. We adjure you, therefore, as you value your eternal interests, not to trifle with convictions, or to endeavor to wear off religious concern and uneasiness, by the vanities of life and the stupefactions of pleasure. Regard and cherish them as the sacred visitations of Heaven; look upon them as mercifully designed to rouse and awaken you from a fatal stupor. They are often the harbingers of mercy. Wherever the Spirit of God is in reality, he will convince of sin; but conviction is produced in thousands who still remain destitute of saving grace.—That influence of the Spirit by which a *change of heart* is effected, is essentially different from that distress and alarm which may be resolved into the exercise of mere natural conscience. For a man to be convinced that he is a sinner, and to tremble at the apprehension of wrath to come, is certainly something very distinct from becoming a new creature. Real Christians have not only perceived their danger, but have fled for refuge; have not only been less or more troubled with a sense of guilt, but in consequence of coming to Christ, have found rest for their souls. On a review of your past life, you perceive innumerable transgressions, it may be, and are perfectly convinced

that you have been "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." So far it is well; your apprehensions are just and well founded, and your situation more replete with danger than you have ever conceived it to be. Do not, however, rest here. Let the views you entertain excite you the more earnestly to press into the kingdom of God. Let them engage you to a more diligent use of the means of grace; and, above all, let them lead you to fix your hope and trust on the Redeemer, whose blood alone can cleanse you from sin, and whose intercession is able to save "to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Apply to him with humble faith and ardent prayer, and though you may be tempted to cherish doubts of the extent of his power and grace, say with him of old, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." Lay aside, as far as possible, every other concern; postpone your attention to every other object, till you have reason to believe you have obtained mercy, and are renewed in the spirit of your mind. Address the Throne of Grace with unceasing importunity, remembering who hath said, "ask and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." In all your addresses to God, make use of the name and intercession of Christ, plead the efficacy of his blood, and the encouragement he hath afforded sinners, in his Gospel, to return to God. Keep a continual watch over your words, thoughts, and actions; keep your heart with all diligence. Guard, with the utmost care, against levity and sloth, two most dangerous snares to the souls of men.

If you ask, how you may know whether you are partakers of the special grace of God; we reply, this will be the best ascertained by its fruits. When you feel a fixed hatred of sin, an intense thirst after holiness and perfection, and a delight in the word and ways of God; when you are habitually disposed to dwell on the thoughts of Christ and heaven; when the Saviour appears unspeakably precious, as "the Pearl of great price," and you are habitually ready to part with every thing for his sake, you may be certain that you are born of God. These are the fruits of the Spirit, which sufficiently demonstrate the influence and presence of that blessed Agent. Till you have experienced effects of this kind, you are in a wretched state, though surrounded with all the brightest earthly prospects, because you are estranged from God, and exposed to his eternal wrath and displeasure.

THE DUTY AND PROPER MANNER

OF HEARING

THE WORD OF GOD.

ON HEARING

THE WORD OF GOD.

Preaching is an ordinance of God, not entirely confined to the Christian dispensation. From the Old Testament history it appears that Ezra, upon the return of the Jews from Babylon, assembled them in the streets of Jerusalem; and ascending a stage or pulpit, for the advantage of being better seen and heard, read the Law in the ears of the people, and gave the interpretation thereof. From that time synagogues were erected in all the cities throughout Judea, and regular officers appointed to read, first the Pentateuch, and, after the persecution by Antiochus, the Prophets, and explain them in ample paraphrases or comments. Such was the origin of preaching.

When the fulness of time was come for God, in his infinite mercy, to send forth his Son, his appearance was first announced by John's proclaiming in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" which, after a short time, was succeeded by the personal ministry of Christ and his Apostles, with whom the dispensation of the Gospel, properly speaking, commenced. After his resurrection, our Lord extended the commission of the Apostles to all nations: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Upon the formation of Christian churches, an order of men was appointed for the express purpose of preaching the word and administering the sacraments, wherein the wisdom and kindness of the Great Head of the Church is eminently conspicuous; for such are the necessary avocations of life, so little the leisure most Christians possess for the acquisition of knowledge, and such the deficiency of many in the elementary parts of education, that they will always, under the blessing of God, be chiefly indebted to this appointment for any extensive acquaintance with divine truth.

The privilege of reading the Scriptures in our native language, is of inestimable value; but were it much more universal than it is, it would not supersede the necessity of *hearing* the word; for there are not only difficulties in the Bible which require to be elucidated, but the living voice of a preacher is admirably adapted to awaken the attention and to excite an interest, as well as to apply the general truths of Revelation to the various cases of Christian experience, and the regulation of human conduct. When an important subject is presented to an audience, with an ample illustration of its several parts, its practical improvement enforced, and its relation to the conscience and the heart insisted upon with seriousness, copiousness and fervor, it is adapted, in the nature of things, to produce a more deep and lasting impression than can usually be expected from reading. He who knows how forcible are *right words*, and how apt man is to be moved by man, has consulted the constitution of our frame, by appointing an order of men, whose office it is to address their fellow creatures on their eternal concerns. Strong feeling is naturally contagious; and if, as the wise man observes, "as iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend," the combined effects of countenance, gesture, and voice, accompanying a powerful appeal to the understanding and the heart, on subjects of everlasting moment, can scarcely fail of being great.

But independent of the natural tendency of the Christian ministry to promote spiritual improvement, it derives a peculiar efficacy from its being a divine appointment. It is not merely a natural, it is also an *instituted* means of good; and whatever God appoints by special authority, he graciously engages to bless; provided it be attended with right dispositions, and proceed from right motives. The means of grace are, as the word imports, the consecrated channels in which his spiritual mercies flow; and as the communication of spiritual blessings always implies an exertion of divine power, so these become the stated instrument, or occasion of its exercise. These are emphatically his ways, in which he is wont to walk with his people: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." Though the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, where the Gospel is not preached, the effects of his operation are rarely to be discerned; and we witness few or no indications of a renewed character out of the bounds of Christendom.

So intimate, by divine appointment, is the connexion betwixt the salvation of man and the ministry of the word, that the method of salvation under the Gospel derives from the latter its distinguishing appellation, being denominated "the hearing of faith." St. James in like manner asserts it to be the instrumental cause of

our regeneration: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." And to the same purpose, St. Peter reminds the Christians whom he was addressing, that they were "born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God; which word," he adds, "is by the Gospel preached unto you." The written word, we are told indeed from the highest authority, is "able to make us wise unto salvation;" and many pleasing instances of its saving efficacy might be produced to confirm this position; but as the Gospel was *preached* before it was *penned*, it is certain that most of the passages which speak on this subject, are to be referred to its public ministry, and that, in subsequent ages, God has put a distinguishing honor upon it, by employing it as the principal means of accomplishing his saving purposes. There is every reason to suppose, that the far greater part of those who have been truly sanctified and enlightened, will ascribe the change they have experienced, principally to "the hearing of faith."

What a powerful motive results from thence to take heed *how we hear!* If we feel any concern for a share in the great salvation, how careful should we be not to neglect the principal means of obtaining it. If there be a class from whom the spiritual beauty and glory of the Gospel remained concealed, it consists of a description of persons, the very mention of whom ought to make us tremble. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Let no man allow himself to neglect the hearing of the word, or hear it in a careless or irreverent manner, under the pretence of his having an opportunity of reading it in private; since its public ministry possesses, with respect to its tendency to excite the attention and interest the heart, many unquestionable advantages; besides, that such a pretence will generally be found hollow and disingenuous. If you find a person habitually inattentive under an awakening ministry, follow him into his retirement, and it may be confidently predicted you will seldom see the Bible in his hands; or if he overcome his aversion to religion so far as occasionally to peruse a chapter, it will be in the same spirit in which he hears; he will satisfy himself with having completed the task, "and straightway go his way, and forget what manner of man he was." If the general course of the world were as favorable to religion as it is the contrary; if an intercourse with mankind were a school of piety, the state of such persons would be less hopeless, and there would be a greater probability of their being gained without the word; but while every thing around us conspires to render the mind earthly and sensual, and the world is continually moulding and transforming its votaries, the situation of such as attend the means of grace in a *careless manner*, is un-

speakably dangerous; since they are continually exposing themselves to influences which corrupt, while they render themselves inaccessible to such as are of a salutary operation. What can be expected but the death of that patient, who takes a course which is continually inflaming his disease, while he despises and neglects the remedy? When we see men attentive under the ministry of the word, and evidently anxious to comprehend its truths, we cannot but entertain hopes of their salvation; "for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

It is observed of the Jews of Berea, that they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, because "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so;" and the result was such as might be expected—a great multitude of them believed. Candid and attentive hearers place themselves, so to speak, in the way of the Spirit; while those who cannot be prevailed upon to give a serious attention, may most justly be said to put the kingdom of God far from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; to such the awful threatenings recorded in the Proverbs are most applicable; "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh." In such cases the ministers of the Gospel can do little more than, like Jeremiah, "retire to weep in secret places" for their pride.

Previously to your entering into the house of God, seek *a prepared heart, and implore the blessing of God* on the ministry of his word. It may be presumed that no real Christian will neglect to preface his attendance on social worship with secret prayer. But let the acquisition of a fervent and serious frame of mind, freed from the cares, vanities, and pollutions of the world, accompanied with earnest desires after God, and the communications of his grace, form a principal subject of your private devotions. Forget not to implore a blessing on the public ministry, that it may accomplish, in yourselves and in others, the great purposes it is designed to answer; and that those measures of assistance may be afforded to your ministers, which shall replenish them with light, love, and liberty; that they may speak the mystery of the Gospel as it ought to be spoken. As the duties of the closet have the happiest tendency, by solemnizing and elevating the mind, to prepare for those of the sanctuary; so the conviction of having borne your minister on your heart before the throne of grace, would, apart from every other consideration, dispose him to address you with augmented zeal and tenderness. We should consider it as such a token for good, as well as such an unequivocal proof of your attachment, as would greatly animate and support us under all our discouragements.

Establish in your minds the highest *reverence and esteem* of the glorious Gospel. Recollect the miracles wrought to confirm it; the sanction, the awful sanction, by which a due reception of it is enforced; and the infinite value of the blood by which its blessings were ratified and procured. Recollect that on its reception or rejection, on the effects which it produces on the heart and life depends our state for eternity; since there are no other means devised for our recovery, no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved, besides that which it exhibits. It is not merely the incorruptible seed of regeneration; it is also the mould in which our souls must be cast, agreeably to the Apostle's beautiful metaphor, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine into which ye were delivered." In order to our bearing the image of Christ, who is the first born among many brethren, it is necessary to receive its impress in every part; nor is there any thing in us what it ought to be, any thing truly excellent, but in proportion to its conformity to that pattern. Its operation is not to be confined to time or place; it is the very *element* in which the Christian is appointed to live, and to receive continual accessions of spiritual strength and purity, until he is presented faultless in the presence of the Divine Glory. The more you esteem the Gospel, the more will you be attached to that ministry in which its doctrines are developed, and its duties explained and inculcated; because, in the present state of the world, it is the chief, though not the only means of possessing yourselves of its advantages. To tremble at God's word, is also mentioned as one of the most essential features in the character of him to whom God will look with approbation.

Hear the word *with attention*. If you are convinced of the justice of the preceding remarks, nothing further is requisite to convince you of the propriety of this advice, since they all combine to enforce it. We would only remark, in general, that the knowledge derived from a discourse depends entirely upon attention; in exact proportion to which will be the progress made by a mind of a given capacity. Not to listen with attention, is the same thing as to have ears which hear not, and eyes which see not. While you are hearing, whatever train of thoughts of a foreign and extraneous nature obtrude themselves, should be resolutely repelled. In the power of fixing the attention, the most precious of the intellectual habits, mankind differ greatly; but every man possesses some, and it will increase the more it is exerted. He who exercises no discipline over himself in this respect, acquires such a volatility of mind, such a vagrancy of imagination, as dooms him to be the sport of every mental vanity; it is impossible such a man should attain to true wisdom. If we cultivate, on the contrary, a

habit of attention, it will become natural; thought will strike its roots deep, and we shall by degrees experience no difficulty in following the track of the largest connected discourse. As we find it easy to attend to what interests the heart, and the thoughts naturally follow the course of the affections, the best antidote to habitual inattention to religious instruction, is the love of the truth. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," and to hear it attentively will be a pleasure, not a task.

The practice of *sleeping* in places of worship, (a practice, we believe, not prevalent in any other places of public resort,) is not only a gross violation of the advice we are giving, but most distressing to ministers, and most disgraceful to those who indulge it. If the Apostle indignantly inquires of the Corinthians whether they had houses to eat and to drink in, may we not with equal propriety ask those who indulge in the practice, whether they have not beds to sleep in, that they convert the house of God into a dormitory? A little self-denial, a very gentle restraint on the appetite, would in most cases put a stop to this abomination; and with what propriety can he pretend to desire the sincere milk of the word, who cannot be prevailed upon, one day out of seven, to refrain from the intemperance which absolutely disqualifies him from receiving it?

Hear the word of God *with impartiality*. To be partial in the law was a crime formerly charged upon the Jewish priests; nor is it less sinful in the professors of Christianity. There is a class of hearers who have their favorite topics, to which they are so immoderately attached, that they are offended if they are not brought forward on all occasions; while there are others, of at least equal importance, which they can seldom be prevailed upon to listen to with patience. Some are never pleased but with doctrinal statements; they are in raptures while the preacher is insisting on the doctrines of grace, and the privileges of God's people; but when he proceeds to inculcate the practical improvement of these doctrines, and the necessity of adorning the profession of them by the virtues of a holy life, their countenances fall, and they make no secret of their disgust. Others are all for practical preaching, while they have no relish for that truth which can alone sanctify the heart. But as it is a symptom of a diseased state of the body to be able to relish only one sort of food, so it is not less of the mind to have a taste for only one sort of instruction. It is difficult to suppose that such persons love the word of God as the word of God; for if they did, every part of it, in its due proportion and its proper place, would be acceptable. It is possible, in consequence of the various exigencies of the Christian life, that there may be seasons to which some views of divine truth may be peculiarly suited, and

on that account heard with superior advantage and delight; but this is perfectly consistent with an impartial attachment to the whole Revelation. But to feel an habitual distaste to instruction the most solid and scriptural, unless it be confined to a few favorite topics, is an infallible indication of a wrong state of mind. It is only by yielding the soul to the impression of every divine communication and discovery, that the several graces, which enter into the composition of the new creature, are nourished and sustained. As the perfection of the Christian system results from the symmetry of its several parts, in which there is nothing redundant, nothing disproportioned, and nothing defective; so the beauty of the Christian character consists in its exhibiting an adequate impress and representation of the whole. If there be any particular branch of the word of God to which we are habitually indisposed, we may generally conclude that it is precisely the part which we most need; and instead of indulging our distaste, we ought seriously to set ourselves to correct the mental disease which has given occasion to it.

In some instances the partiality to certain views of truth, to the exclusion of others of which we are complaining, may arise not so much from moral disorder, as from a deficiency of religious knowledge, and that contraction of mind which is its usual consequence. We would earnestly exhort persons of this description not to make themselves the standard, or attempt to confine their ministers to the first principles of the oracles of God. There are in most assemblies some who are capable of digesting strong meat, whose improvement ought to be consulted; and it behooves such as are not, instead of abridging the provisions of the family, to endeavor to enlarge their knowledge and extend their inquiries. A Christian minister is compared by our Lord to a great householder, who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

Hear the word with constant *self-application*. Hear not for *others*, but for *yourselves*. What should we think of a person who, after accepting an invitation to a feast, and taking his place at the table, instead of partaking of the repast, amused himself with speculating on the nature of the provisions, or the manner in which they are prepared, and their adaptation to the temperament of the several guests, without tasting a single article? Such, however, is the conduct of those who hear the word, without applying it to themselves, or considering the aspect it bears on their individual character. Go to the house of God with a serious expectation and desire of meeting with something suited to your particular state, something that shall lay the axe to the root of your corruptions, mortify your easily besetting sins, and confirm the graces in which you are most deficient. A little attention will be

sufficient to give you that insight into your character, which will teach what you need, what are the peculiar temptations to which you are exposed, and on what account you feel most shame and humiliation before God. Every one may know, if he pleases, the plague of his own heart. Keep your eye upon it while you are hearing, and eagerly lay hold of whatever is best adapted to heal and correct it. Remember that religion is a *personal* thing, an *individual* concern; for every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and every man bear his own burden. "Is not my word as a fire," saith the Lord; "and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" If such be its power and efficacy, lay your hearts open to it, and expose them fully to the stroke of the hammer, and the action of the fire. Do not imagine, because you are tolerably well acquainted with the system of the Gospel, you have therefore nothing to learn; and that your only obligation to attend to its ministry, arises from the necessity of setting an example. It is probable your knowledge is much more limited than you suppose; but if it be not, it is a great mistake to imagine the only advantage derived from hearing is the acquisition of new truths. There is a spiritual perception more important than the knowledge which is merely speculative. The latter is at most but a means to the former, and the perception is not confined to new propositions; it is frequently, nay, more frequently, attached to truths already known; and when they are faithfully and affectionately exhibited, they are the principal means of calling into action, and strengthening the habits of internal grace. Love, joy, humility, heavenly-mindedness, godly sorrow for sin, and holy resolutions against it, are not promoted so much by novel speculation, as by placing in a just and affecting light the acknowledged truths of the Gospel, and thereby stirring up the mind by way of remembrance. "While I am in this tabernacle," said St. Peter, "I will not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth." We appeal to the experience of every real Christian, whether the sweetest and most profitable seasons he has enjoyed, have not been those in which he is conscious of having learned no new truth, strictly speaking, but was indulged with spiritual and transforming views of the plain, unquestionable discoveries of the Gospel. As the word of God is the food of souls, so it corresponds to that character in this respect among others—that the strength and refreshment it imparts depends not upon its novelty, but upon the nutritious properties it possesses. It is a sickly appetite only which craves incessant variety.

Hear *with candor*. The indulgence of a nice and fastidious taste is as adverse to the improvement of the hearer, as it is to the

comfort of the minister. Considering the variety of our avocations, the necessity we are under of addressing you in all states of mind, and sometimes on the most unexpected occasions, if we could not rely on your candor, our situation would be scarcely tolerable. When the general tendency of a discourse is good, and the instruction delivered weighty and solid, it is the part of candor to overlook imperfections in the composition, manner, or elocution of the speaker; imitating, in this respect, the example of the Galatians, of whom Paul testified that they did not despise his temptation which was in the flesh—some peculiarity in his speech or countenance, we may suppose, which exposed him to the derision of the unfeeling. The Lord, by the mouth of Isaiah, severely censures such as make a man *an offender for a word;* a fault too prevalent in many of our churches, especially among such as are the least informed and judicious; for the disposition to sit in judgement upon the orthodoxy of ministers, is exactly in an inverse proportion to the ability. Be not hasty in concluding that a preacher is erroneous, because he may chance to use a word or phrase not exactly suited to your taste and comprehension; it is very possible the idea it is intended to convey may perfectly accord with your own sentiments; but if it should not, it is equally possible the propriety of it may be vindicated by considerations with which you are not acquainted. "Be not many masters, many teachers," saith St. James, "knowing ye shall receive the greater condemnation." Hear the word of God less in the spirit of judges than those who shall be judged by it. If you are not conscious of your need of religious instruction, why attend the places appointed for that purpose? But if you are, how inconsistent is it to indulge that spirit of cavil and censure, which can have no other effect than to deter your ministers from the faithful discharge of their office, from declaring the whole counsel of God? In most congregations there is one or more persons who value themselves on their skill in detecting the unsoundness of ministers; and who, when they hear a stranger, attend less with a view to spiritual improvement, than to pass their verdict, which they expect shall be received as decisive. It is almost unnecessary to add, that they usually consist of the most ignorant, conceited, and irreligious part of society. Such a disposition should, as much as possible, be discouraged and suppressed.

"Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls." Despise not men of plain talents, who preach the truth, and appear to have your eternal welfare at heart. If you choose to converse with your fellow-christians on what you have been hearing, (a practice which if rightly conducted, may be very edifying,) let your conversation turn more upon *the tendency,*

the spiritual beauty and glory of those great things of God, which have engaged your attention, than on the merit of the preacher. We may readily suppose that Cornelius and his friends, after hearing St. Peter, employed very few words in discussing the oratorical talents of a great Apostle, any more than the three thousand who, on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart; their minds were too much occupied by the momentous truths to which they had been listening, to have room for such reflections; yet this is the only kind of religious conversation (if it deserves the appellation) in which too many professors engage. "Give me," says the incomparable Fenelon, "the preacher who imbues my mind with such a love of the *word of God*, as makes me desirous of hearing it from *any* mouth."

When your ministers are exposing a particular vice, and endeavouring to deter from it by the motives which reason and Revelation supply, guard against a suspicion of their being *personal*. That they ought not to be so, we readily admit; that is, that they ought not to descend to such a minute specification of circumstances as shall necessarily direct the attention to one or more individuals; but if they are not at liberty to point their arrows against the particular vices among them; or are expected, lest they wound, to make a courteous apology, by assuring the audience of their hope and conviction that none among them are implicated, they had better seal up their lips in perpetual silence. It is a most indispensable part of our office to warn sinners of every description; and, that we may not beat the air, to attack particular sins, as well as sin in the abstract; and if without our intending it, an individual suspects he is personally aimed at, he merely bears an involuntary testimony to our fidelity and skill.

Hear the word of God *with a sincere resolution of obeying it*. "If ye know these things," said our Lord, "happy are ye if ye do them." "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a man who built his house upon a rock." To be a forgetful hearer of the word, and not a doer, is to forget all the advantages of the Christian dispensation, which is imparted solely with a view to practice. The doctrine of faith is published with a design to produce the obedience of faith in all nations. The doctrine of repentance is nothing more or less than the command of God, that all men, every where, should repent. If we are reminded that "he who, in times past, spake to the fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," it is that we may be admonished not to refuse him that speaketh. If we are taught the supreme dignity and exaltation of Christ, as a mediator, it is that "every knee may bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord." If the Apostles, having the mind of Christ,

faithfully imparted it, it was that the same mind might be in us, to purify our passions and regulate our conduct. We can scarcely imagine a greater inconsistency, than to hear the word with apparent seriousness, without intending to comply with its directions. It is a solemn mockery, concealing, under an air of reverence and submission, a determination to rebel. To suppose the Supreme Being pleased with such a mode of attendance, is to impute to him a conduct which it would be an insult to ascribe to a fellow-creature; for who but the weakest of mortals, under the character of a master, or a sovereign, would be gratified with the profound and respectful attention with which his commands were heard, while there existed a fixed resolution not to obey? Remember, I entreat you, the practical tendency of every Christian doctrine. Remember, that the ministry of the Gospel is the appointed instrument of forming the spirits of men to faith and obedience; and that, consequently, the utmost attention and assiduity in hearing it, are fruitless and unavailing, if they fail to produce that effect.

Finally. Be careful, after you have heard the word, *to retain and perpetuate its impressions.* Meditate, retire, digest it in your thoughts, turn it into prayer; in a word, spare no pains to fasten it upon your hearts. You have read of those to whom the Gospel was preached, as well as to us; "but the word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Endeavour to exert upon it distinct and vigorous acts of faith, and thereby to mingle and incorporate it with all the powers of the mind, and all the springs of action; but this you can never accomplish without deep and serious reflection, for want of which, it is too often left loose, and exposed, like uncovered seed, which the fowls of heaven easily pick up and devour. "Then cometh that wicked one," says our Lord, "and taketh it out of his heart, and he becometh unfruitful." How many hearers, by engaging in worldly conversation, or giving way to a vain and unprofitable train of thought, when they leave the sanctuary, lose the impressions they had received, instead of conducting themselves like persons who have just been put in possession of a treasure they are anxious to secure from depredation! If Satan watches for an opportunity of taking the word out of our hearts what remains but that we oppose vigilance to vigilance, and effort to effort; and since the prize contended for, by the powers of darkness, is *our souls*, what a melancholy reflection will it be, if the disinterested malice of our enemies renders them vigilant and active in seeking our destruction, while we are careless and negligent in seeking our own salvation? Satan, conscious that the word of God is capable of elevating us to that pinnacle of happiness from whence he fell, contemplates its

success with alarm; and spares no artifice, nor stratagem, which his capacious intellect can suggest, to obstruct its progress; and if we, by our criminal negligence, give him the possession of our hearts, we shall be guilty of that prodigy of folly and infatuation, which is equally condemned by the counsels of heaven, and the machinations of hell.

AN

ADDRESS

TO

THE REV. EUSTACE CAREY,

JANUARY 19, 1814,

ON HIS DESIGNATION AS

A CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

TO

INDIA.

AN

ADDRESS.

As it has been usual in the designation of a Missionary, after solemnly commending him to God by prayer, to deliver a short address; in compliance with a custom not perhaps improper, or illaudable, I shall request your attention to a few hints of advice, without attempting a regular charge, which I neither judge myself equal to, nor deem necessary, since, on your arrival in India, you will receive from your venerable relative, Dr. Carey, instruction more ample and appropriate than it is in my power to communicate.

When the first Missionaries who visited these Western parts were sent out, their designation was accompanied with prayer and fasting; whence we may infer, that fervent supplication ought to form the distinguishing feature in the exercises appropriated to these occasions.

An effusion of the spirit of prayer on the church of Christ, is a surer pledge of success in the establishment of missions, than the most splendid exhibitions of talent. As there is no engagement more entirely spiritual in its nature, nor whose success is more immediately dependent on God than that on which you are entering; to none is that spiritual aid more indispensably necessary, which is chiefly awarded to the prayers of the faithful.

"Separate to me," said the Holy Ghost to the disciples assembled at Antioch, "separate to me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them." When the omniscient Searcher of hearts separates a Christian minister from his brethren, and assigns him a distinct work, it implies the previous perception of certain qualifications for its successful discharge not generally possessed; for though none can give the increase but God, much of his wisdom is to be traced in the selection of instruments fitted to his purpose. The first and most essential qualification for a Missionary is a decided predilection for the office; not the effect of

sudden impulse, but of serious, deep consideration; a predilection strengthened and matured by deliberately counting the cost. Every man has his proper calling; and while the greater part of Christian teachers are perfectly satisfied with attempting to do all the good in their power in their native land, there are others of a more enterprising character, inflamed with the holy ambition of carrying the glad tidings beyond the bounds of Christendom; like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who was determined not to build on another man's foundation, but, if possible, to preach Christ in regions where his name was not known. The circumstances which contribute to such a resolution are various, often too subtile and complicated to admit of a distinct analysis; a constitutional order of mind, a natural neglect of difficulties and dangers, and impatience of being confined within the trammels of ordinary duties, together with many accidental associations and impressions, may combine to form a missionary spirit; nor is it so necessary minutely to investigate the causes which have led to a given determination, as the legitimacy of the object, and the purity of the motive.

We adore the prolific Source of all good, in the variety and discrimination of his gifts, by which he imparts a separate character, and allots a distinct sphere of operation to the general and essential principles which form the Christian and the minister. "He gave some apostles, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The sacred impulse to which we have adverted, I am certain you have felt in no common degree, and that it has been your ardent wish to be employed as a messenger to the heathen, from the time you devoted yourself to the ministry. Of your possessing this most essential prerequisite for the office you have undertaken, it is impossible for those who know you to entertain a doubt.

The next qualification of whose necessity I must be allowed to remind you, is singular *self-devotement*, without a degree of which it is not possible to be a Christian, still less to any useful purpose a Minister, least of all a Missionary. In resolving to quit your native country, and to relinquish your nearest connexions with little expectation of beholding them again in the flesh, you have given decisive indications of this spirit; nor to a mind like yours, exquisitely alive to the sensibilities of nature and friendship, can the sacrifice you have already made be deemed inconsiderable. But as it is still impossible for you to conjecture the extent of the privations and trials to which, in the pursuit of your object you may be exposed, your situation is not unlike that of Abraham, who being commanded to leave his own country and his father's house,

went out, not knowing whither he went. As you are entering on an untried scene, where difficulties may arise to exercise your patience and fortitude, of which you can form but a very inadequate conception, you will do well to contemplate the example, and meditate the words of St. Paul, in circumstances not very dissimilar: "And now I go up bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what shall befall me there, save that in every city the Holy Ghost witnesseth that bonds and affliction await me; but none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry I have received of the Lord to fulfil it." The love of ease, or the indulgence of secular ambition, would be fatal to the object you are pursuing; nor in your situation is there any thing so much to be dreaded as a divided heart, a spirit which hesitates betwixt the calls of duty and the attractions of the world. "To arm yourself with the same mind that was in Christ, who himself suffered, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps," is a most indispensable part of your duty. In proportion as you feel yourself a stranger upon the earth, eagerly attached to none of its enjoyments or pursuits, prepared, without repining, to relinquish whatever Providence may demand, and suffer whatever it may inflict; in a word, in proportion to the degree in which you abandon all right in yourself will you be qualified for the work of an evangelist. Purged from earthly concretions and worldly passions, you will become "a vessel of honor fitted for the Master's use." He who is not possessed of a considerable portion of a self-denying spirit, which was eminently the spirit of him "who pleased not himself," can engage in no employment more irksome and intolerable than that of a missionary; for what pleasure can he expect, what advantage can he hope to reap, independent of the consciousness or the hope of doing good. By the nature of your undertaking, all the avenues to secular reputation and emolument are shut against you; on the brilliant illusions with which the children of this world are enchanted, you have closed your eyes, and nothing is left but the severe and sublime satisfaction of following in the steps of those apostles and prophets, who, in the midst of the derision of the world, exhausted themselves in a series of efforts to enlighten and save it. You have chosen, it is true, the better part; but it is a part which you must not hope to sustain, but by the perfect subjection and mortification of every rival passion. You must be content to derive your satisfaction from yourself, or rather from your consciousness of the divine approbation, since you will meet with few disposed to sympathize in your sorrows, or rejoice in your success.

The next qualification necessary for a teacher of Christianity among

heathens, is the *spirit of faith;* by which I intend, not merely that cordial belief of the truth, which is essential to a Christian, but that unshaken persuasion of the promises of God respecting the triumph and enlargement of his kingdom, which is sufficient to denominate its possessor *strong in faith.* It is impossible that the mind of a Missionary should be too much impressed with the beauty, glory, and grandeur of the kingdom of Christ, as it is unfolded in the oracles of the Old and New Testament; nor with the certainty of the final accomplishment of those oracles, founded on the faithfulness and omnipotence of their Author. To those parts of Scripture his attention should be especially directed, in which the Holy Ghost employs and exhausts, so to speak, the whole force and splendor of inspiration, in depicting the future reign of the Messiah, together with that astonishing spectacle of dignity, purity, and peace, which his church will exhibit, when, "having the glory of God," her bounds shall be commensurate with those of the habitable globe, when every object on which the eye shall rest, will remind the spectator of the commencement of a new age, in which the tabernacle of God is with men, and he dwells amongst them. His spirit should be imbued with that sweet and tender awe which such anticipations will infallibly produce, whence will spring a generous contempt of the world, and an ardor, bordering on impatience, to be employed, though in the humblest sphere, as the instrument of accelerating such a period. For, compared to this destiny in reserve for the children of men, compared to this glory, invisible at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has hitherto shone upon the world is midnight, and the highest splendors that have invested it, the shadow of death.

Independent of these assurances, the idea of converting Pagan nations to the Christian faith must appear chimerical. The attempt to persuade them to relinquish their ancient mode of thinking, corroborated by habit, by example, by interest, and to adopt a new system of opinions and feelings, and enter on a new course of life, will ever be deemed by the worldly-wise impracticable and visionary. "Pass over the isles of Chittim and see," said the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, "and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods!" For a nation to *change* their gods, is represented by the highest authority as an event almost unparalleled: and if it be so difficult to induce them to change the *mode* of their idolatry, how much more to persuade them to abandon it altogether. Idolatry is not to be looked upon as a mere speculative error respecting the object of worship, of little or no practical efficacy. Its hold upon the mind of a fallen creature is most tenacious, its

operation most extensive. It is a corrupt practical institution, involving a whole system of sentiments and manners which perfectly moulds and transforms its votaries. It modifies human nature in every aspect under which it can be contemplated, being intimately blended and incorporated with all its perceptions of good and evil, with all its infirmities, passions, and fears. In a country like India, where it has been established for ages, its ramifications are so extended as to come into contact with every mode and every incident of life. Scarce a day or an hour passes with an Hindoo, in which, by the abstinences it enjoins, and the ceremonies it prescribes, he is not reminded of his religion. It meets him at every turn, presses like the atmosphere on all sides, and holds him by a thousand invisible chains. By incessantly admonishing him of something which he must do, or something which he must forbear, it becomes the strongest of his active habits; while the multiplicity of objects of worship, distinguished by an infinite variety in their character and exploits, is sufficient to fill the whole sphere of his imagination. In the indolent repose which his constitution and climate incline him to indulge, he suffers his fancy to wander without limit, amidst scenes of voluptuous enjoyment, or objects of terror and dismay; while, revolving the history of his gods, he conceives himself absorbed in holy contemplations. There is not a vicious passion he can be disposed to cherish, not a crime he can be tempted to commit, for which he may not find a sanction and an example in the legends of his gods. Though the system of polytheism established in India, considered in an argumentative light, is beneath contempt, being destitute of the least shadow of proof, as well as of all coherence in its principles; yet, viewed as an instrument of establishing a despotic empire over the mind, nothing, it must be acknowledged, was ever more artfully contrived; not to mention the distinction of casts, which is obviously adapted to fix and perpetuate every other institution. That the true religion should degenerate into idolatry, is easily to be accounted for from the known principles of human nature; because such deterioration is aided by its corruption, flatters its strongest propensities, and artfully adapts itself to whatever is feeble, sensitive, and voluptuous in the character of the species.

——————Facilis descensus Averni.

As it is easy to descend from an elevation which it is difficult to climb; to fall from the adoration of the Supreme Being to the worship of idols, demands no effort. Idolatry is strongly intrenched in the corruptions, and fortified by the weakness of human nature. Hence we find all nations have sunk into it in succession,

frequently, in opposition to the strongest remonstrances of inspired prophets; while we have no example in the history of the world, of a single city, family, or individual, who has renounced it, through the mere operation of unassisted reason; such is the fatal propensity of mankind to that enormity. It is the veil of the covering, cast over the flesh, which nothing but the effulgence of Revelation has pierced. The true religion satisfies and enlarges the reason, but militates against the inclinations of men. Resting on a few sublime truths addressed to the understanding and conscience, affording few distinct images to the fancy, and no indulgence to the passions, it can only be planted and preserved by a continual efflux from its Divine Author, of whose spirituality and elevation it so largely partakes.

But however difficult it may be to prevail upon men to relinquish the practice of idolatry, the accomplishment of this is not the whole, perhaps not the most arduous part of your work; since you are too well acquainted with the genius of Christianity to permit yourself to rest satisfied with any external profession, which is destitute of the fruits of the spirit. The change you wish to realize, and which you will alone contemplate with satisfaction, is the effectual conversion of the soul from sin to holiness, and from the world to God; and how much the necessity of this increases the difficulty of propagating the gospel among heathens with success, is so obvious, that I need not insist upon it at large. The valley of vision in Ezekiel, filled with bones which are very dry, is no exaggerated picture of the state of the heathen world; and what less than an Almighty power can clothe them with sinews, cover them with flesh, and breathe into them the breath of life?

Hence the absolute necessity of a vigorous faith in the promises of God, respecting the future renovation of mankind, which will support you amidst the greatest discouragements, prompt you to hope against hope, and inspire you with unshaken perseverance and resolution; besides that, on account of the glory it gives to God, it imparts by divine appointment to its possessor an interest in his all-sufficiency and power. It is a mysterious link in the chain of moral causes and effects, which connects the weakness of the creature with the almightiness of God. "Be it unto thee," said our Lord on a certain occasion, "be it unto thee according to thy faith." Faith, considered as a mere speculative assent to the truth of a divine testimony, may be looked upon as uniform or stationary; but when we consider it as a practical principle, as one of the graces of the Spirit, we perceive it to be, in common with others, susceptible of continual enlargement and increase. In the degree of power which future and invisible realities exert over

the mind, in the practical energy of what men profess to believe, in the promptitude and certainty with which it determines them to a correspondent conduct, there is the utmost diversity even among those who believe with the heart. The faith to which the Scriptures attach such momentous consequences, and ascribe such glorious exploits, is a practical habit, which, like every other, is strengthened and increased by continual exercise. It is nourished by meditation, by prayer, and the devout perusal of the Scriptures; and the light which it diffuses becomes stronger and clearer by an unintercepted converse with its object, and a faithful compliance with its dictates; as, on the contrary, it is weakened and obscured by whatever wounds the conscience or impairs the purity and spirituality of the mind. This is the shield which will cover you from every assault; the chief part of that defensive armor which it behooves you to put on. Reposing on the word of Him with whom all things are possible, of Him who cannot lie; in the formidable bulwarks of idolatry, in the invincible rampart of prejudice and superstition, which the great adversary of mankind has cast up to obstruct the progress of truth, you will see nothing to appal you; you will feel the battle not to be yours, but the Lord's, who, determined to subdue his enemies under his feet, condescends to employ you as an humble instrument of his victories; and instead of sinking under the consciousness of weakness, you will glory in your infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon you.

Allow me to remind you of the absolute necessity of cultivating a mild, conciliating, affectionate temper, in the discharge of your office. If an uninterested spectator, after a careful perusal of the New Testament, were asked what he conceived to be its distinguishing characteristic, he would reply, without hesitation, that wonderful spirit of philanthropy by which it is distinguished. It is a perpetual commentary on that sublime aphorism, "God is love." As the Christian religion is an exhibition of the incomprehensible mercy of God to a guilty race, so it is dispensed in a manner perfectly congenial with its nature; and the book which contains it is replete with such unaffected strokes of tenderness and goodness, as are to be found in no other volume. The benign spirit of the gospel infused itself into the breast of its first Missionaries. In St. Paul, for example, we behold the most heroic resolution, the most lofty superiority to all the modes of intimidation and danger; a spirit which rose with its difficulties, and exulted in the midst of the most dismaying objects; yet when we look more narrowly into his character, and investigate his motives, we perceive it was his attachment to mankind that inspired him with this intrepidity, and urged him to conflicts more painful and

arduous than the votaries of glory have ever sustained. Who would have supposed it possible for the same breast to be the seat of so much energy and so much softness; that he who changed the face of the world by his preaching, and while a prisoner made his judge tremble on the tribunal, could stoop to embrace a fugitive slave, and to employ the most exquisite address to effect his reconciliation with his master? The conversion of Onesimus afforded him a joy "like the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." When the spiritual interests of mankind were concerned, no difficulties so formidable as to shake his resolution, no details so insignificant as to escape his notice. To the utmost inflexibility of principle, he joined the gentlest condescension to human infirmity; "becoming all things to all men, that he might win some; to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to them that were without law, as without law;" adapting on all occasions his modes of address to the character and disposition of those with whom he conversed. It was the love of Christ and of souls that produced and harmonized those apparent discordances.

Such is the example you must propose for your imitation, if you would realize to any considerable extent the object of your mission to the heathen. By a mild and unassuming deportment, by an attention to their worldly as well as to their spiritual interests; by adopting, as far as you have ability, whatever may contribute to their happiness and improvement, convince them that you are the friend of man. When you have established yourself in their affection, you have gained an important point; you have possessed yourself of a signal advantage for the successful prosecution of your work.

Your business is to persuade men; and how can you expect to succeed unless you conciliate their regard; which is more necessary on account of the seeming severity which attaches to some part of the doctrine of Christ. Were you permitted to inculcate a self-pleasing doctrine, the want of suavity and gentleness of manner might easily be dispensed with; the laxity of the precept would compensate for the austerity of the teacher. But when you are called to insist on the state of man as a fallen and guilty creature, to enforce the necessity of self-denial, to impose the most powerful restraints on the indulgence of criminal passions; when you must denounce the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, great mildness and affection are requisite, to prevent such representations from exciting disgust. What is awful and alarming in Christianity, should be softened and tempered by a persuasive tenderness of address. Let it be your care to divest religion of whatever is unlovely and repulsive, that it may

appear not only pure, but gentle; not only majestic, but amiable; equally favorable to the enjoyment and the communication of happiness. But I have dwelt longer on this head than was necessary, when I recollect that the person I am addressing is distinguished by a temper which will render the mild condescensions I am recommending not more his duty than his delight.

The affectionate and conciliatory disposition we have been enforcing, must be combined with prudence, and the diligent study of human nature, which you will find absolutely necessary to conduct you through intricate and unbeaten paths. St. Paul frequently reminds the Thessalonians of the *manner of his entrance* amongst them. In the first introduction of the Gospel amongst a people, it is of great importance that every step be well weighed, that nothing be done which is rash, offensive, or indecorous, but every precaution employed which is consistent with godly simplicity, to disarm prejudice and conciliate respect; nor is there any thing in the conduct of the first ministers of the Gospel more to be admired than the exquisite propriety with which they conducted themselves in the most delicate situations. Their zeal was exempt from indecorum, their caution from timidity or art. In the commencement of every great and hazardous undertaking, the first measures are usually decisive, at least in those instances in which success is dependent, under God, on the voluntary co-operation of mankind. A single act of imprudence is sufficient to blast the undertaking of a Missionary, which, in the situation of an ordinary minister, would scarcely be felt. The best method of securing yourself from errors in this quarter, is to endeavor to acquire as large a measure as possible of the graces of the Spirit, to be deeply embued with the wisdom that is from above. Nothing subtile or refined should enter into the views of a Christian Missionary. Let him be continually elevating his principles, and purifying his motives; let him be clothed with humility, and actuated on all occasions with love to God and the souls of men; and his character cannot fail of being marked with a propriety and beauty which will ultimately command universal esteem. These were the only arts which a Schwartz in the East, and a Brainerd in the West, condescended to cultivate.

It must be remembered, however, that the functions of a Missionary connect him more with mankind than ordinary ministers, and less admit of an entire abstraction from the world; on which account he will sometimes be exposed to difficulties from which nothing can extricate him, but a considerable acquaintance with men and things. He will probably be called to transact affairs of considerable moment with persons in superior stations, with men of dissimilar characters and habits, of different nations and relig-

ions, who possess nothing in common but the epidemic selfishness of human nature; in an intercourse with whom, he will need the wisdom of the serpent combined with the innocence of the dove. The prudence, however, which it is desirable a Missionary should possess, is not a timid, calculating policy; it is manly and heroic, operating with promptitude and vigor on an extensive fund of knowledge, acquired by habits of acute and vigilant observation. Of many functions of life it is possible to foresee the duties they comprise, and to ascertain beforehand the extent of their demand on our time and talents. In the office of a Missionary it is impossible. His engagements must be in a great degree fortuitous, arising out of circumstances which he could neither foresee nor control; and hence, unless he possess a prompt and enlightened judgement, he will often feel himself embarrassed and perplexed.

There is much in the situation of a Missionary calculated to keep him awake and attentive to his duties. To a stated pastor, it is confessed, there are not wanting powerful motives to diligence and exertion, at the same time that it is equally obvious there are considerable temptations to indolence and formality. Since the services he is engaged to perform admit of little variety, and are easily reducible to a system, they are in no small danger of being performed rather from the mechanism of habit than the impulse of feeling; and much ardor of mind is requisite to infuse freshness and novelty into a series of operations so uniform. In the performance of duties which proceed in a settled routine, it is equally difficult to feel and to impart an interest. With the Missionary it is quite the reverse. Incapable, as he is, of forming a conception of the situation in which he may be placed, or of the difficulties with which he may be surrounded, he must be conscious his undertaking involves a character of enterprize and hazard. He is required to explore new paths, and, leaving the footsteps of the flock, to go in quest of the lost sheep, on whatever mountain it may have wandered, or in whatever valley it may be hid. He must be prepared to encounter prejudice and error in strange and unwonted shapes, to trace the aberrations of reason, and the deviations from rectitude, through all the diversified mazes of superstition and idolatry. He is engaged in a series of offensive operations; he is in the field of battle, wielding "weapons which are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of Satan." When not in action, he is yet encamped in an enemy's country, where nothing can secure his acquisitions, or preserve him from surprise, but incessant vigilance. The voluntary exile from his native country to which he submits, is sufficient to remind him continually of his important embassy, and to induce a solicitude that so many sacrifices may not be made, so

many privations undergone in vain. He holds the lamp of instruction to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; and while there remains a particle of ignorance not expelled, a single prejudice not vanquished, a sinful or idolatrous custom not relinquished, his task is left unfinished. It is not enough for him, on a stated day, to address an audience on the concerns of eternity; he must teach from house to house, and be instant in season and out of season, embracing every opportunity which offers of inculcating the principles of a new religion, as well as of "confirming the souls of his disciples." He must consider himself as the mouth and interpreter of that Wisdom "which crieth without, which uttereth her voice in the streets, which crieth in the chief places of concourse."

Under these impressions, you will peruse the Acts of the Apostles, which record the methods by which the Gospel was first propagated, with deep attention, where you will trace precedents the most instructive, as well as difficulties surmounted, and trials endured, exactly similar to your own; nor will you fail to feel a sympathy of spirit with those holy men in their labors and sufferings, which other ministers can but very imperfectly possess. Encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses, you will esteem it no inconsiderable honor to share in the same combat, encounter the same enemies, and accomplish the share allotted you of those sufferings which remain to Christ's mystical body. I scarcely need recommend to your attention the letter of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, where the office of an evangelist (for such you must consider yourself) is delineated with such precision and fidelity. While you peruse his inspired directions, you are entitled to consider yourself as addressed, inasmuch as the Spirit, under whose direction they were written, unquestionably intended them for the instruction of all who are in similar circumstances.

In directing your view to apostolical precedents, attend not so much to their *letter* as to their *spirit*. Investigate carefully the circumstances in which they were placed; compare them with your own with respect to the particulars in which they coincide, and in which they differ, that you may follow them, not as a servile copyist, but as a judicious and enlightened imitator.

Be *strong* in the grace that is in the Lord Jesus. Among the nations which will be the scene of your future labors, you will witness a state of things essentially different from that which prevails here, where the name of Christ is held in reverence, the principal doctrines of his religion speculatively acknowledged, and the institutes of worship widely extended and diffused. The leaven of Christian piety has spread itself in innumerable directions, modified public opinion, improved the state of society, and given

birth to many admirable institutions unknown to Pagan countries. The authority of the Saviour is recognized, his injunctions in some instances obeyed, and the outrages of impiety restrained by law, by custom, and, above all, by the silent counteraction of piety in its sincere professors. Hence, in combating the vices and irreligion of the age, so many principles are conceded, and so much ground already won from the adversary, that little remains but to urge him with the legitimate consequences of his own opinions, and to rouse the dormant energies of conscience by the exhibition of acknowledged truth. Ministers of the gospel in this quarter of the globe resemble the commanders of an army stationed in a conquered country, whose inhabitants, overawed and subdued, yield a partial obedience; they have sufficient employment in attempting to conciliate the affections of the natives, and in carrying into execution the orders and regulations of their Prince; since there is much latent disaffection, though no open rebellion; a strong partiality to their former rulers, with few attempts to erect the standard of revolt.

In India, Satan maintains an almost undisputed empire, and the powers of darkness, secure of their dominion, riot and revel at their pleasure, sporting themselves with the misery of their vassals, whom they incessantly agitate with delusive hopes and fantastic terrors, leading them captive at their will, while few efforts have been made to despoil them of their usurped authority. Partial invasions have been attempted, and a few captives disenthralled, but the strength and sinews of empire remain entire, and that dense and palpable darkness which invests it, has scarcely felt the impression of a few feeble and scattered rays. In India, you will witness the predominance of a system which provides for the worship of gods many, and of lords many, while it excludes the adoration of the Supreme Being, legitimates cruelty, polygamy, and lust, debases the standard of morals, oppresses with ceremonies those whom it deprives of instruction, and suggests no solid hope of happiness beyond the grave.

You will witness with indignation, that monstrous alliance betwixt impurity and devotion, obscenity and religion, which characterizes the popular idolatry of all ages, and which, in opposition to the palliating sophistry of infidels, sufficiently evinces it to be what the Scriptures assert—the worship of devils, not of God.

When we consider that moral causes operate on free agents, we shall not be surprised to find their effects are less uniform than those which result from the action of material and physical powers, and that human minds are susceptible of opposite impressions from the same objects.

On such as have neither been established in the evidences, nor

felt the efficacy of revealed religion, a residence in a Pagan country has usually a most pernicious effect, and matures latent irreligion into open impiety. The absence of Christian institutions and Christian examples, leaves them at liberty to gratify their sensual inclinations without control, and the familiar contemplation of Pagan manners and customs gradually wears out every trace and vestige of the religion in which they were educated, and emboldens them to consider it in the light of a local superstition. They are no further converts to the Brahminical faith than to prefer it to their own; that is, they prefer the religion they can despise with impunity, to one that afflicts their consciences; that which leaves them free, to that which restrains them. As the secret language of their heart had always been, "cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from amongst us," in the absence of God, of his institutes and his worship, they find a congenial element, nor are they at all displeased at perceiving the void filled with innumerable fantastic shapes and chimeras; for they contemplate religion with great composure, provided it be sufficiently ridiculous.

You, I am persuaded, will view the condition of millions who are involved in the shades of idolatry, originally formed in the image of God, now totally estranged from their great Parent, and reposing their trust on things which cannot profit, with different emotions, and will be anxious to recall them to the Bishop and Shepherd of their souls. Instead of considering the most detestable species of idolatry as so many different modes of worshipping the One Supreme, agreeable to the jargon of infidels, you will not hesitate to regard them as an impious attempt to share his incommunicable honors; as composing that image of jealousy which he is engaged to smite, confound, and destroy. When you compare the incoherence, extravagance, and absurdity which pervade the systems of polytheism, with the simple and sublime truths of the gospel, the result will be an increased attachment to that mystery of godliness. When you observe the anxiety of the Hindoo devotee to obtain the pardon of sin, and the incredible labors and sufferings which he cheerfully undergoes, to quiet the perturbations of conscience, the doctrine of the cross will rise if possible still higher in your esteem, and you will long for an opportunity of crying in his ears, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." When you witness the immolation of females on the funeral pile of their husbands, and the barbarous treatment of aged parents left by their children to perish on the banks of the Ganges, you will recognize the footsteps of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and will be impatient to communicate the mild and benevolent maxims of the gospel. When you behold an immense population held in chains by that detesta-

ble institution the *cast*, as well as bowed down under an intolerable weight of Brahminical superstitions, you will long to impart the liberty which Christ confers, "where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

The cultivation of a wilderness, however, requires a more robust and vigorous industry than is necessary to preserve in a good condition the ground which is already reclaimed. The noxious produce of a long tract of time must be extirpated, the stubborn and intractable soil broken up, marshes drained, irregularities levelled, and much persevering labor employed, ere the ordinary operations of agriculture can commence, or the seed be cast into the earth. In attempting to evangelize the inhabitants of Pagan countries, you must expect to encounter peculiar difficulties; you will meet in the natives with the ignorance and mental imbecility of children, without the candor, simplicity, and freedom from prejudice, which are among the charms of that tender age. To efface erroneous impressions, to eradicate false principles, and reduce them even to a natural state, defective and corrupt as that state is, will be no inconsiderable task, since there is not only an immense vóid to be filled, and great deficiencies to be supplied, but principles and prejudices to contend with, capable of the most active resistance.

In recommending the principles of Christianity to a Pagan nation, I would by no means advise the adoption of a refined and circuitous course of instruction, commencing with an argumentative exposition of the principles of natural religion, and from thence advancing to the peculiar doctrines of Revelation; nor would I advise you to devote much time to an elaborate confutation of the Hindoo or Mahometan systems. The former of these methods would be far too subtle and intricate for popular use; the latter, calculated to irritate. Great practical effects on the populace are never produced by profound argumentation; and every thing which tends to irritation and disgust should be carefully avoided. Let your instruction be in the form of a *testimony;* let it, with respect to the mode of exhibiting it, though not to the spirit of the teacher, be *dogmatic*. *Testify* repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It might become a Socrates, who was left to the light of nature, to express himself with diffidence, and to affirm that he had spared no pains in acting up to the character of a philosopher, in other words, a diligent inquirer after truth; but whether he had philosophized aright, or attained the object of his inquiries, he knew not, but left it to be ascertained in that world on which he was entering. In him, such indications of modest distrust were graceful and affecting, but would little be-

come the disciple of Revelation, or the Christian minister, who is entitled to say with St. John, "we *know* that the whole world lieth in wickedness, and that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."

After reminding them of their state as guilty and polluted creatures, which the ceremonies of their religion teach them to confess, exhibit to the inhabitants of Hindostan, the cross of Christ as their only refuge. Acquaint them with his incarnation, his character as the Son of God and the Son of Man, his offices, and the design of his appearance; not with the air of a disputer of this world, but of him who is conscious to himself of his possessing the medicine of life, the treasure of immortality, which he is anxious to impart to guilty men. Insist fearlessly on the futility and vanity of all human methods of expiation, on the impotence of idols, and the command of God to "all men every where to repent, inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." Display the sufferings of Christ like one who was an eye-witness of those sufferings, and hold up the blood, the precious blood of atonement, as issuing warm from the cross. It is a peculiar excellence of the Gospel, that in its wonderful adaptation to the state and condition of mankind as fallen creatures, it bears intrinsic marks of its divinity, and is supported not less by internal than by external evidence. By a powerful appeal to the conscience, by a faithful delineation of man in his grandeur and in his weakness, in his original capacity for happiness and his present misery and guilt, present this branch of its evidence in all its force. Seize on every occasion those features of Christianity which render it interesting, and by awakening the fears, and exciting the hopes, of your hearers, endeavor to annihilate every other object, and make it appear what it really is, the pearl of great price, the sovereign balm, the cure of every ill, the antidote of death, the precursor of immortality. In such a ministry, fear not to give loose to all the ardor of your soul, to call into action every emotion and every faculty which can exalt or adorn it. You will find ample scope for all its force and tenderness, and should you be called to pour your life as a libation on the offering of the Gentiles, you will only have the more occasion to exult and rejoice.

In order to qualify yourself for the performance of these duties, it is above all things necessary for you to acquaint yourself with the genuine doctrines of Christianity in their full extent; but it will be neither necessary nor expedient to initiate your converts into those controversies which, through a long course of time, have grown up amongst Christians. Endeavor to acquire as extensive and perfect a knowledge as possible of the dictates of in-

spiration, and by establishing your hearers in these, preclude the entrance of error, rather than confute it. Be always prepared to answer every modest inquiry into the grounds of your faith and practice; and that you may be more capable of entering into their difficulties, and anticipating their objections, place yourself as much as possible in the situation of those whom you are called to instruct. When we consider the permanent consequences likely to result from first impressions on the minds of Pagans, the few advantages they possess for religious discussion, and the extreme confidence they are likely to repose in their spiritual guides, you must be conscious how important it is to "plant wholly a right seed." Your defective representations of truth will not soon be supplied, nor the errors you plant extirpated, since we find societies of Christians in those parts of the world, where discussion and controversy abound, retain from generation to generation the distinguishing tenets of their leaders. In forming the plan, and laying the foundation of an edifice which it is proposed shall last for ever, it is desirable that no materials should be admitted but such as are solid and durable, and no ornaments introduced but such as are chaste and noble. As it would be too much to expect you should perfectly succeed in imparting the mind of Christ, might I be permitted to advise, you will lean rather to the side of *defect* than *excess*, and in points of inferior magnitude omit what is true, rather than inculcate what is doubtful; since the influence of religion on the heart depends not on the mutiplicity, but on the quality of its objects.

The unnecessary multiplication of articles of faith gives a character of littleness to Christianity, and tends in no small degree to impress a similar character on its professors. The grandeur and efficacy of the gospel results not from an immense accumulation of little things, but from its powerful exhibition of a few great ones. If you are determined to initiate your hearers into the subtleties and disputes which have prevailed in the Western world, I would recommend you, in imitation of the Church of Rome, to dispense with the New Testament as the basis of instruction, and to betake yourself to the writings of the schoolmen; for that divine volume, rightly interpreted, supplies no aliment to a disputatious humor, which has never ceased since it was first introduced, to be the scoff of infidels, and the plague of the church.

Among the indirect benefits which may be expected to arise from missions, we may be allowed to anticipate a more pure, simple, apostolical mode of presenting the Gospel, which, it may be doubted whether any of the various denominations under which the followers of Christ have been classed, have exhibited precisely as he and his Apostles taught it. In consequence of the collis-

ion of disputes, and the hostile aspect which rival sects bear to each other, they are scarcely in a situation to investigate truth with perfect impartiality. Few or none of them have derived their sentiments from the sacred oracles, as the result of independent inquiry; but almost universally from some distinguished leader, who at the commencement of the Reformation formed his faith, and planned his discipline, amidst the heat and fury of theological combat. Terms have been invented for the purpose of excluding error, or more accurately defining the truth, to which the New Testament is a stranger, and on those terms associations and impressions ingrafted, which in some instances, perhaps, little correspond with the divine simplicity of the Gospel. It is far from my intention to insinuate, that serious and fundamental errors may justly be imputed to the classes of Christians to whom I refer. I am fully convinced of the contrary;—but it may be worth while to inquire, whether we have not all in our turn receded somewhat from the standard, if not by the adoption of positive error, yet by a disproportionate attention to some parts of Revelation, to the neglect of others equally important, in consequence of an undue partiality to our respective peculiarities.

The situation of a Missionary retired from the scene of debate and controversy, who has continually before his eyes the objects which presented themselves to the attention of the Apostles, is favorable to an emancipation from prejudice of every sort, and to the acquisition of just and enlarged conceptions of Christianity. It will be your lot to walk the same wards in this great hospital, and to prescribe to the same class of patients that first experienced the salutary and renovating power of the Gospel. The gods which are worshipped at this time in India are supposed by Sir William Jones to be the very same, under different names, with those who shared the adoration of Italy and Greece when the gospel was first published in those regions, so that you will be an eye-witness of the very evils and enormities which then prevailed in the Western hemisphere, and which the sword of the Spirit so effectually subdued. You will be under great advantages for ascending to first principles, for tracing the stream to its head and spring, by having incessantly to contemplate that state of things in a moral view, of which every page of Scripture assumes the existence, but of which the inhabitants of Europe have no living experience. It is with great satisfaction, accordingly, I have observed the harmony of doctrine, the identity of instruction, which has pervaded the ministry of Protestant Missionaries, who have been employed under the auspices of different denominations of Christians.

If to survey mankind in different situations, and under the influ-

ence of opposite institutions, civil and religious, tends to elevate the mind above vulgar prejudice, by none is this advantage more eminently possessed than by Christian Missionaries. In addition to the advantages usually anticipated from foreign travel, their attention is directly turned to man in the most interesting light in which he can be viewed. An intelligent Missionary, in consequence of daily conversing with the natives on the most momentous subjects, and at the most affecting moments, has opportunities of becoming acquainted, not merely with the surface of manners, but with the interior of the character, which can rarely fall to the lot of any other person; besides that Christianity, it may be justly affirmed, is the best decipherer of the human heart, and is that alone which can solve its contradictions and explain its anomalies. Hence it may be fairly expected, nor will the expectation disappoint us, that an experienced Missionary, possessed of the talent and habit of observation, will, in every country, deserve to be classed among the most enlightened of its inhabitants.

Few things more powerfully tend to enlarge the mind than conversing with great objects, and engaging in great pursuits. That the object you are pursuing is entitled to that appellation, will not be questioned by him who reflects on the infinite advantages derived from Christianity, to every nation and clime where it has prevailed in its purity, and that the prodigious superiority which Europe possesses over Asia and Africa, is chiefly to be ascribed to this cause. It is the possession of a religion which comprehends the seeds of endless improvement, which maintains an incessant struggle with whatever is barbarous, selfish, or inhuman, which by unveiling futurity, clothes morality with the sanction of a divine law, and harmonizes utility and virtue in every combination of events, and in every stage of existence; a religion, which, by affording the most just and sublime conceptions of the Deity, and of the moral relations of man, has given birth at once to the loftiest speculation, and the most child-like humility, uniting the inhabitants of the globe into one family, and in the bonds of a common salvation; it is this religion, which, rising upon us like a finer sun, has quickened moral vegetation, and replenished Europe with talents, virtues, and exploits, which, in spite of its physical disadvantages, have rendered it a paradise, the delight and wonder of the world. An attempt to propagate this religion among the natives of Hindostan, may perhaps be stigmatized as visionary and romantic; but to enter the lists of controversy with those who would deny it to be great and noble, would be a degradation to reason.*

* It is impossible to read the strictures of the Edinburgh Review on Missions, in an article which appeared under that title, without surprise and indignation, that such sentiments could find admission in a work which possesses such just

On these principles the cause of missions has recently been sustained in Parliament, and the propriety and expedience of attempting the propagation of Christianity in India, demonstrated by arguments and considerations suited to the meridian of such assemblies. We feel ourselves highly indebted to those distinguished senators who exerted their eloquence on that occasion, and have no hesitation in asserting that a more wise and magnanimous measure was never adopted by an enlightened legislature, than that of facilitating the communication of Christian knowledge to the subjects of our Eastern empire. As a political measure, nothing more unexceptionable or beneficial can be conceived. It is not in this light, however, we would wish you to regard your present undertaking. What may satisfy the views of a statesman, ought not to satisfy a Christian minister. It is the business of the former to project for this world; of the latter for eternity. The former proposes to improve the advantages, and to mitigate the evils of life; the latter, the conquest of death, and the achievement of immortality. They proceed in the same direction, it is true, as far as they go; but the one proceeds infinitely farther than the other.

In the views of the most enlightened statesmen, compared to those of a Christian minister, there is a littleness and limitation, which is not to be imputed in one case as a moral imperfection, nor in the other as a personal merit; the difference arising purely

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claims to literary merit. The anonymous writer of the article alluded to, with the levity of a buffoon, joined to a heart of iron, and a face of brass, has more than insinuated, that the Christianity attempted to be promoted in India by the Missionaries at Serampore, would, were it adopted, prove a serious injury to the natives, and that they are much happier and more virtuous under their present institutions. The system of religion, be it remembered, which these men have attempted to introduce, and which this *Christian* Reviewer loads with abuse, is precisely the same in its doctrinal articles with that of the Church of England, to which he has subscribed, *ex animo* no doubt, his unfeigned assent and consent. It may be hoped that at a time when the Church of England is evincing a spirit of moderation and forbearance, and can boast of so many prelates and dignitaries, distinguished for their piety and learning, no clergyman for the future will be allowed to degrade himself in a similar manner, without the most indignant rebuke. It may possibly gratify certain spirits to see the Dissenters and Methodists vilified and abused, but they will do well to remember, that the indulgence of a profane and scoffing humor must be ultimately injurious, not only to Christianity, but to any Christian community whatever; and that to stab religion through the sides of fanaticism, is a stale artifice of infidels, by which the simplest can no longer be deceived. I sincerely hope the conductors of the Edinburgh Review have long been ashamed of the article in question. When I compare the intellectual power displayed in some articles of that publication, with the extreme ignorance of religion evinced in others, I know not how better to characterize it than in the language of Virgil, in speaking of Polyphemus,—

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, *cui lumen ademptum.*"

from the disparity in the subjects upon which they respectively speculate. Should you be asked on your arrival in India, as it is very probable you will, what there is in Christianity which renders it so inestimable in your eyes, that you judged it fit to undertake so long, dangerous, and expensive a voyage, for the purpose of imparting it,—you will answer, without hesitation, it is the power of God to salvation; nor will any view of it short of this, or the inculcation of it for any inferior purpose, enable it to produce even those moralizing and civilizing effects it is so powerfully adapted to accomplish. Christianity will civilize, it is true, but it is only when it is allowed to develope the energies by which it sanctifies. Christianity will inconceivably ameliorate the present condition of being,—who doubts it? Its universal prevalence, not in name but in reality, will convert this world into a semi-paradisaical state; but it is only while it is permitted to prepare its inhabitants for a better. Let her be urged to forget her celestial origin and destiny, to forget that "she came from God, and returns to God;" and whether she is employed by the artful and enterprising, as the instrument of establishing a spiritual empire and dominion over mankind, or by the philanthropist, as the means of promoting their civilization and improvement, she resents the foul indignity, claps her wings, and takes her flight, leaving nothing but a base and sanctimonious hypocrisy in her room.

Preach it then, my dear brother, with a constant recollection, that such is its character and aim. Preach it with a perpetual view to eternity; and with the simplicity and affection with which you would address your dearest friends, were they assembled round your dying bed. While others are ambitious to form the citizen of earth, be it yours to train him for heaven; to raise up the temple of God from among the ancient desolations; to contribute your part towards the formation and perfection of that eternal society, which will flourish in inviolable purity and order when all human associations shall be dissolved, and the princes of this world shall come to nought. In the pursuit of these objects, let it be your ambition to tread in the footsteps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz; I may add, of your excellent relative, with whom we are happy in perceiving you to possess a congeniality of character, not less than an affinity of blood.

But should you succeed beyond your utmost hope, expect not to escape the ridicule of the ungodly, or the censure of the world; but be content to sustain that sort of reputation, and run that sort of career, invariably allotted to the Christian Missionary; where, agreeable to the experience of St. Paul, obscurity and notoriety, admiration and scorn, sorrows and consolations, attachments the most tender, and opposition the most violent, are interchangeably mingled.

But whatever be the sentiments of the world, respecting which you will indulge no excessive solicitude, your name will be precious in India, your memory dear to multitudes, who will reverence in you the instrument of their eternal salvation; and how much more satisfaction will accrue from the consciousness of this, than from the loudest human applause, your own reflections will determine. At that awful moment when you are called to bid a final adieu to the world, and to look into eternity; when the hopes, fears, and agitations, which sublunary objects shall have occasioned, will subside like a feverish dream, or a vision of the night, the certainty of belonging to the number of the saved will be the only consolation; and when to this is joined the conviction of having contributed to enlarge that number, your joy will be full. You will be conscious of having conferred a benefit on your fellow creatures, you know not precisely what, but of such a nature that it will require all the illumination of eternity to measure its dimensions, and ascertain its value. Having followed Christ in the *regeneration*, in the preparatory labors accompanying the renovation of mankind, you will rise to an elevated station in a world where the scantiest portion is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and a conspicuous place will be assigned you in that unchanging firmament, where those who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

But it is time I should close this address, which has already been extended much further than was at first designed. On the necessity of maintaining an exemplary purity of conduct, little or nothing has been said; because such is our confidence in your character, that we deemed admonition of this kind superfluous. As you are, however, still in the body, and will be exposed to numerous temptations, you will feel the propriety of being jealous over yourself with a godly jealousy, and exerting a continual care and vigilance, lest, in the awful language of the Apostle, "after preaching to others you yourself should be a cast-away." I need not remind you, that as the Society under whose auspices you are proceeding to India, have on no occasion employed a Missionary in whom they reposed more confidence, or of whom they formed more raised expectations; if you should become vain, worldly, sensual, indolent, and consequently useless, ours will not be an ordinary disappointment; we shall have fallen from a great hope. You will be sensible of the indispensable necessity of not interfering with the politics of India, nor of giving the smallest ground of umbrage and distrust to the constituted authorities, to whom it will be your duty, not less than your interest, to pay on all occasions, in return for the protection they will yield, the most respectful deference.

Let me also recommend you to listen to the advice, and be guided by the suggestions, as far as your conscience will permit, of your Fathers in the Mission, and of Dr Carey in particular, whose wisdom and experience, to say nothing of his relationship to you, entitle him to reverential attention. You are now about to be removed from us, who, it is probable, shall see your face no more; but you will not be removed from the communion of saints, which no seas can divide, no distance impair, in which we shall often meet at a throne of grace, whence fervent prayers will ascend to the Father of Mercies, that he may keep you under his holy protection, and cause the riches of his blessings to descend on the head of him who was separate from his brethren.

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FUNERAL ORATION,

DELIVERED AT

THE INTERMENT OF THE

REV. HABAKKUK CRABB.

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FUNERAL ORATION.

Among the many appearances which man presents to the view of a contemplative mind, death is one of the most extraordinary. Whatever be the station he has filled, and however he has conducted himself in it, whether he has adorned it by virtue or degraded it by vice, whether he has passed obscurely through the world, or filled it with the fame of his actions, he soon disappears, and the *place which once knew him knows him no more*. Over all the sons of Adam death hath reigned. The worthy and beneficent are embalmed by the tears of tender but transient regret. The chasm their departure has occasioned in society is filled up by their successors, who tread the same circle of life and death, and thus perpetuate the established order of the universe.

But though the grave terminates the business of life, it does not terminate the inquiries of the living. Whether the whole of existence is comprised within the present life, or whether it be merely a passage into an unseen state, is a question which has engaged the attention of men in every age ; nor would it be possible (were it ever so proper) to detail within the limits of this address the various reasonings and conjectures to which it has given occasion. When we contemplate death under its sensible appearances, the destruction of the external organs, and the corruption of the whole mass, we are tempted to regard it as the extinction of being, and to suppose its effects upon the human race are the same as upon the inferior orders of creatures. Whatever has been the object of the senses in both is reduced to putrefaction and dust. But when again we recollect in how many important respects we are distinguished above the brutes, we cannot help indulging higher expectations and looking for a nobler destiny. Our superior

comprehension of mind qualifies us for a larger duration of being. While the brute is capable of enjoying little more than the present moment, the remembrance of what is past, and the anticipation of what is to come, enables us to multiply our resources and to diffuse our existence, if I may so speak, over a larger surface. To compare one state of being with another, to learn wisdom from experience, and to regulate our future expectation by what has already occurred, are employments congenial with the human mind. But it is evident that a creature possessed of such faculties will be capable of continually making new acquisitions of knowledge, and of advancing nearer and nearer to perfection.

Among all the tribes of creatures with which we are acquainted, man is the only one that appears to have any dread of annihilation, or the remotest conception of another state. How shall we account for the universal prevalence of these sentiments, in spite of all the sensible appearances of death, unless they are either the vestige of some early revelation or the incorrupted dictate of nature? How is it that we are the only beings that extend their anxieties beyond the grave; that we are so reluctant to quit the present scene, and that when we are at length compelled to depart, we grasp at the very shadow of immortality, and console ourselves with the hope of surviving in the regrets of our friends, and the reputation of our actions?

Though there seems to be much plausibility in these topics, it must be confessed, the best arguments for a future state are derived from the moral part of our nature; or, in other words, from our capability of good and ill desert. For, since it is plain that God hath made us moral agents, and placed us under a law, we may be assured he has not made us so in vain, but that he will call us to an account for our actions; and as there is no exact distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, we are entitled to expect another suited to the respective characters of men and the moral attributes of the Deity. If, after all, we consider of actual opinions on this head, we shall find the wisest among the heathen were far from attaining any certainty. When they gave scope to their feelings and their hopes, they sometimes painted the elysian abodes of the virtuous in the warmest coloring of eloquence; in their cooler moments they subsided into scepticism; so that, on the whole, the idea of a future state seems to have operated not so much as a fixed principle as a vague presentiment.

Revelation can alone boast of having "brought life and immortality to light." The religion of Jesus Christ places the reality of a future state at the foundation of its truths. It is there so constantly reverted to, so often repeated, and so solemnly enforced, that it has never been by any class of Christians disputed or de-

nied. Nor is the reality only of a future state revealed in Christianity. As far as is consistent with the present limitation of our faculties, it affords us the justest views of its nature; which it makes to consist not in sensual gratifications, or festive bowers, the visions of a Mahometan paradise, but in enjoyments the most suited to the rational and immortal mind; an union with God, the knowledge of his perfections, and the eternal fruition of his love. The information which Christianity imparts on these subjects is not conveyed in dark and symbolical expressions, or in a chain of philosophical reasoning, but in a manner the most perspicuous and popular. With what majestic simplicity does our Lord assure us of the resurrection of the just: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." When many of the disciples of our Lord went back and walked no more with him, being offended with the sublime mysteries of his doctrine, he took occasion to ask his twelve apostles, "Will ye also go away?" To which Peter, in the name of them all, made this reply, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In this short answer we behold the distinguishing lustre of Christianity. It explains at once the ground of a rational attachment to it, and will be sufficient to justify its profession from the reproach of folly, however mysterious its doctrines, however arduous its duties, and however painful or costly its sacrifices.

There are two purposes connected with the present solemnity to which the doctrine of immortality ought to be applied; the first regards the regulation of life, the second the inspiring us with fortitude in the contemplation of our own deaths and those of our relatives and friends. If we consider ourselves as candidates for an eternal state of happiness, it becomes us to regard life with all its vicissitudes as a probationary state, and to look upon every thing that is not directly or indirectly conducive to our eternal welfare, foreign to our purpose and undeserving our pursuit. Heavenly-mindedness is in this view as much the dictate of reason as of Scripture. It is nothing more than the placing our affections where we expect our felicity; the wisdom of preferring the end to the means, that which is permanent to that which is transitory. Let the men of the world, who disbelieve the declarations of the gospel respecting eternal realities, lead a life, if they please, of dissipation and vice; but for a professor of religion to confine his affections to the earth is equally impious and absurd. Distracted betwixt his inordinate attachment to the present and his apprehension of a

future world, his religion, if it will bear that name, must be a constant source of disquietude. He has neither the calmness of insensibility, nor the triumph of faith. His prevailing regard to the interests of the present life renders it impossible for him to set his affections on a better state, while the carnal and reluctant glances he is compelled to take of that state, are sufficient to embitter his enjoyments and disturb his repose.

The misery which persons of this description suffer from an inward conflict between principle and practice, is the chief reason that has induced superficial observers to represent Christianity as a gloomy, melancholy system. There is no other foundation for this charge, than that its claims are grand and extensive, that it disdains a compromise with the corrupt attachments of the heart, and that they, who will not allow it the dominion of their affections, will find it the troubler of their thoughts.

Whoever lives under the habitual influence of those tempers which qualify us for heaven, derives from his view of the eternal world the purest serenity and delight. In the midst of the severest disappointments of human life, secret consolations spring up in his mind, which sometimes swell into rapture, disarm the world of its terrors, and afford him a prelibation of unutterable bliss. In vain will you look elsewhere for true magnanimity, and moral grandeur. It is religion alone which both animates and softens the heart, cherishes sensibility, instills fortitude, and enables us to triumph without extravagance and suffer without dejection.

If the Scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to so much weight in the regulation of LIFE, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of DEATH, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. "I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever Christianity appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the TOMB; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a Christian in the view of his *own* dissolution only; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is

continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow on such occasions nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, *Jesus wept*. But the sorrow which a Christian feels in such situations is mingled with hope. By the light of faith he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life, and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head; and when he "who is their life shall appear, they shall appear together with him in glory." The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, out-live the habitable globe, and form in all probability a principal part of the happiness of the blessed.

It is not unusual, I am aware, on occasions like these, to pass high encomiums on the character of the deceased; a mode of proceeding the less requisite in the present instance, as the character of Mr. Crabb was too well established, and held in too high esteem, to have any thing to hope from praise, or to fear from censure. His mild and gentle spirit rendered it nearly impossible for him to have any enemies. The innocence and sanctity of his behaviour, the sensibility of his heart, the fidelity with which he discharged the duties of life, and the equanimity with which he bore its rebukes and sufferings, will leave a lasting impression on the minds of all his friends and acquaintance. You of this church and congregation, have lost a friend, an instructor, a pastor; one who was anxious, on every occasion, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare, who knew how to rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. You, my friends, will long remember, I trust, the affectionate exhortations he addressed to you, and make it appear on the day of solemn account that he has "not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for nought." His relation to you as your pastor has ceased; but its effects and consequences will never cease; they will reach into eternity, and "become the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death." If the duties of the ministerial character appeared so weighty in the eyes of an Apostle that he was ready to sink under them, and exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" you will recollect it was its connexion with the eternal interests of his hearers which rendered his situation so arduous, and his responsibility so awful.

You have now before you one more example of the uncertainty of life. Your deceased friend and pastor was cut off in the midst

of his days. His sun, instead of performing the usual circuit, set in its meridian. He no doubt often endeavored, during his continuance among you, to convince you of the vanity of the world, and the insufficiency of all its enjoyments to render you happy; but Providence determined he should do more; that he should instruct you from the tomb, on these topics, and bring them home to your senses.

Another year has passed away, and you have entered upon a new portion of time.* The division of time into distinct periods, besides its utility in business and in science, is favorable to moral reflection. On the entrance on a new year, a contemplative mind will be naturally employed in estimating its acquisitions, comparing its improvements, retracing past occurrences, and revolving future prospects. The giddy and thoughtless feel their attention for a moment fixed, and, suspecting all is not right, form some indistinct resolution of repentance and amendment; which they are determined to execute as soon as some present scheme shall be finished, some prevailing passion gratified, or some expected change in their situation shall take place. The present moment seems always attended with insuperable difficulties; but they still flatter themselves with the hopes of some more auspicious period, when their minds will be disengaged, their passions composed, and religion assert its power. Thus year rolls on after year, the self-delusion is repeated, and while they are planning new schemes of life, they sink into the grave.

If a hardened contempt of religion has slain its thousands, a feeble and irresolute spirit has slain its ten thousand. Is there none in this assembly, who, it is to be feared, are convinced of the importance of religion, and are yet unwilling to pay an immediate attention to it, flattering themselves they shall have ample opportunities of satisfying all its demands?

Vain, presumptuous man! Hast thou penetrated the councils of the Almighty, or been permitted to read thy destiny, that, whilst thou beholdest the ravages of death all around thee, the multitudes which fall at thy right hand and at thy left, the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, hurried into eternity, thou shouldest suppose thyself alone firm and immoveable amidst this flux and succession of being? Wouldst thou wish to surmount the fear of death? Acquaint thyself with him who is the resurrection and the life; with that Saviour who is its author, its revealer, and its pattern. "Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him." Attend to his instructions, and yield yourself up to his guidance. You will then be able to converse familiarly with

* This Oration was delivered on New Year's Day.

death. You will feel no terror in the prospect of future judgement, but will wait for its approach, and be able to stand before the Son of God at his coming. "Finally, let us who are of the light and of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Instead of murmuring at such afflictive dispensations as separate us from those we esteem and love, let us employ them as inducements to set our affections on a better world, where we shall shortly join them; remembering that whatever ties of affection are broken by death, are taken from the enjoyments of time to enrich the prospect of eternity.

THE

CHARACTER

OF THE

REVEREND THOMAS ROBINSON,

VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, LEICESTER:

AS EXHIBITED IN A SPEECH

AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY, APRIL, 1813.

CHARACTER.

It is with a melancholy satisfaction I rise to express my entire approbation of the sentiments contained in the resolution just read.

It would in my opinion, have been unnatural to usher our annual report into the world, without noticing that solemn and affecting dispensation which has deprived this society, this town, and this county, of its principal ornament. We are weakened this day by the falling of a pious and a great man in Israel. In the formation of this society our incomparable friend had a principal share, and through every stage he gave it an unremitted attention, and watched over its interests with a parental solicitude. The idea of instituting an auxiliary society in Leicester was no sooner suggested to him, than it engaged his most cordial good wishes; he lent to its support the vigor of his masculine understanding, the energies of his capacious heart; and to him, beyond any other individual, it is indebted for the patronage and the maturity it has attained. He was, indeed, the father of this institution. But of what institution, formed for the promotion of the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind in this place, was he not the father? We can look no where throughout this large and populous town, without perceiving the vestiges of his unwearied solicitude for the advancement of the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He has inscribed his history in the numerous charitable and religious foundations which owe their existence or their prosperity to his influence. Our jails, our hospitals, our schools, our churches, are replete with monuments of his worth, and with the effects of his energetic benevolence.

It is recorded of the great Hannibal, that, when an infant, his father conducted him to an altar, and made him vow eternal hostility to the Roman republic. Our venerable friend, when he first entered Leicester, appears, with an ardor not less intense, to

have devoted himself to its interests. From the moment he entered the place, he appears to have relinquished all selfish pursuits, all idea of private gratification; and to have formed that system of conduct from which he never departed, which had the most immediate tendency to meliorate the state of its inhabitants. He became altogether a public character; he meditated, he wrote, he preached, he breathed, only for the public. Rarely, if ever, was there a mind more perfectly purified from every tincture of selfishness or vanity. He made the most extensive sacrifices of his time and of his repose, with a spontaneity and alacrity which implied an almost total oblivion of his existence as an individual. Endowed with a capacity for high attainments in science, and distinguished at the University by the honors assigned to superior merit, he generously declined the pursuit of literary eminence for the sole purpose of doing good. It is but few who are capable of adequately appreciating the magnitude of such a sacrifice. Dr. Paley was, unquestionably, one of those few; and I had it from the lips of our venerable friend, that in addicting himself to the duties of a parish priest, he had, in the opinion of that great man, chosen the better part; a choice which, it is evident, Heaven singularly sanctioned and approved. In fixing his system of life, he had, unquestionably, a view to a future account, and formed his determination on the assured persuasion of his appearing before the judgement-seat of Christ, where the salvation of one soul will cause a more glorious distinction than the greatest literary attainments; where all greatness of a merely intellectual nature will disappear, and nothing endure the scrutiny but active and disinterested virtue.

In the mean time, how narrow the bounds of his influence, how confined the ascendancy of his character, had he been only the solitary student, instead of being the zealous and exemplary pastor, and the active citizen! On the former supposition, he had inscribed his memorial in books; on the present, he inscribed it on hearts; and instead of his being an object of the admiration of the few, he was the man of the people.

In separate parts of his character, it were not impossible to find some who equalled, and others who excelled him; but in that rare combination of qualities which fitted him for such extensive usefulness, he stands unrivalled. As a pastor and public instructor, it may be possible to meet with some who have attained the same eminence; as a public man he may have been equalled; but where shall we look in modern times for such an example of the union of the highest endowments as a pastor and preacher, with the qualifications adapted to the functions of civil life? It is this rare union which appears to me to give the character of our ven-

erable friend its decided pre-eminence. It is not necessary to recall to your recollection the talents of Mr. Robinson as a public instructor; you have most, if not all of you, witnessed his pulpit exertions, on that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed by his manly, unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statement, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, struck with his powerful hands, sent forth more than mortal sounds; and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid conflagrations of Cicero.

The hearers of Mr. Robinson were too much occupied by the subjects he presented to their attention to waste a thought on the speaker; this occupied a second place in the order of their reflections; but when it did occur, it assumed the character, not of superficial admiration, but of profound attachment. Their feelings towards him were not those of persons gratified, but benefitted; and they listened to his instructions, not as a source of amusement, but as a spring of living water. There never was a settled pastor, probably, who had formed a juster conception of the true end of preaching, who pursued it more steadily, or attained it to a greater extent. He preached immortal truth with a most extraordinary simplicity, perspicuity, and energy, in a style adapted to all capacities, equally removed from vulgarity and affected refinement; and the tribute paid to his exertions consisted not in loud applauses; it was of a higher order; it consisted of penitential sighs, holy resolutions, of a determination of the whole soul for God, and such impressions on the spirits of men as will form the line of separation betwixt the happy and the miserable to all eternity.

In a word, by the manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and the success which followed was such as might be expected from such efforts. Through the protracted period of his labors, many thousands, who have finished their course with joy, derived from his ministry, there is reason to believe, the principle of a new life.

His residence in Leicester forms an epoch in the religious history of this county. From that time must be dated, and to his agency under Providence must be ascribed, a decided improvement in the moral and religious state of this town and its vicinity; an increase of religious light; together with the general diffusion of a taste and relish for the pure word of God. It is only once in an age that an individual is permitted

to confer such benefits on the place of his residence, as this ancient and respectable borough derived from the labors of Mr. Robinson; and the change which Baxter accomplished at Kidderminster, he effected at Leicester. It was the boast of Augustus, that he found the city of Rome composed of brick, and left it marble. Mr. Robinson might say without arrogance, that he had been the instrument of effecting a far more beneficial and momentous change. He came to this place while it was sunk in vice and irreligion; he left it eminently distinguished by sobriety of manners, and the practice of warm, serious, and enlightened piety. He added not aqueducts and palaces, nor did he increase the splendor of its public edifices; but he embellished it with undecaying ornaments; he renovated the minds of the people, and turned a large portion of them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. He embellished it with living stones, and replenished it with living temples of the Holy Ghost. He extended its intercourse with heaven, and prepared a numerous class of its inhabitants for the enjoyment of celestial bliss. Of the number of those who will devoutly acknowledge him as their spiritual father at the day of final audit, that day only can determine. Nor was his usefulness confined to the permanent inhabitants of this place; it was extended to the asylum of the sick, and to the cell of the criminal. The former found in him a physician to the soul, and returned to their homes not only with recruited health, but with renovated minds; and the latter were in many instances, by penitence and prayer, prepared for their awful destiny. Of him it may be said, to an extent seldom equalled by a mere mortal, "he went about doing good. When the eye saw him, it gave witness of him; when the ear heard him, it blessed him; for he helped the poor and the fatherless, and delivered them that were ready to perish." In addition to his numerous avocations, he undertook the weekly instruction of an excellent and extensive school which was formed in his own parish, under his auspices, to which he imparted the elements of religious knowledge with a tenderness and assiduity which will never be forgotten.

There was scarcely a charitable institution set on foot, or a scheme of benevolence devised, of which he did not form the principal spring. He was truly the centre about which every thing of public utility revolved; while his wisdom guided, his spirit animated, and his character impressed itself on all useful undertakings.

Though he came to this place a stranger, without any of the means of acquiring adventitious distinction, it is not to be wondered at that a man endued with such moral and intellectual qualities

should gradually acquire distinguished ascendancy. Obstructions and difficulties, indeed, he encountered at the outset of his career, but they gradually gave way to the energy of his character, and at length formed a vantage ground, on which he stood more pre-eminent. By slow degrees, by a continual series of virtuous exertions, and a patient and unremitted perseverance in well-doing, he acquired a degree of influence over all classes of society which has been the lot of few individuals. Whatever was the subject of dispute, the eminence of Mr. Robinson's services was never called in question; and however discordant the sentiments and feelings of the public on other topics, they perfectly coalesced in the homage due to his worth. To the veneration in which he was so generally held, may be ascribed the principal part of that freedom from party animosities, of that concord and harmony, which have, for a long period, so happily distinguished this town. The deference due to his opinion on all occasions of difficulty, the unbought tribute of esteem and affection claimed by his worth, we delighted to pay. We felt gratified on finding such a rock on which we could repose our confidence, such a great example of what is most dignified in human nature, on which we could fix our eyes. By a reflex act, the virtuous part of the community felt better pleased with themselves in proportion as they became susceptible of love and admiration towards an object so fitted, on every principle of reason and religion, to command them.

Though I have had the honor of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Robinson for upwards of thirty years, it is comparatively but of late that I had an opportunity of contemplating him more nearly. While placed at a distance, I admired him as one of the remote luminaries which adorn the hemisphere; I certainly perceived him to be a star of the first magnitude; but no sooner was I stationed upon the spot than I became sensible of the lustre of his beams, felt the force of his attraction, and recognized in him the sun and centre of the system. His merit was not of that kind which attracts most admiration at a distance; it was so genuine and solid, that it grew in estimation the more closely it was inspected. It is possible some men may have extended their influence to a wider circle, and moved in a more extended sphere. But where influence is diffused beyond a certain limit, it becomes attenuated in proportion to its diffusion; it operates with an energy less intense. Mr. Robinson completely filled as large a sphere of personal agency as is, perhaps, possible to an individual. He left no part of it unoccupied, no interstices unsupplied, and spread himself through it with an energy, in which there was nothing irregular, nothing defective, nothing redundant.

Our deceased friend was eminently distinguished by a steady

uniformity of conduct. While he appeared to manifest himself by the extent and variety of his exertions, the principles upon which they were conducted, the objects they were destined to promote, were invariably the same. He was not active at intervals, and at other times torpid and inert; he did not appear the public man at one time, and at another absorbed in selfish pursuits; his efforts to do good in season and out of season were constant, and his course knew no other variety than that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His goodness, founded on principle, and corroborated by habit, operated with the steadiness of a law of nature, the beneficial results of which can never be sufficiently appreciated till they are suspended. They who contemplated Mr. Robinson at the distance of forty years, viewed him with the same emotions which he excited at a more advanced age, moderated, however, and chastised, by the apprehension, that it was possible some unexpected temptation might occur to divert him from his career. We have seen it completed, we have witnessed his perseverance and his conquest, and have seen his virtues and his fame placed under the safeguard and seal of death and immortality.

Though he had reached that period of life which constitutes old age, it was a *cruda viridisque senectus*. His age had impaired little or nothing of his vigor; its chief effect was, that of imparting additional dignity to his countenance, and weight to his character. He fell like a noble tree, after two or three strokes, with all his sap and verdure, with extended boughs and rich foliage, while thousands were reposing under his shadow and partaking of his fruits. Seldom has death gained a richer spoil, than in the extinction of the earthly existence of this admirable man.

Having expatiated so largely on the eminent benefits accruing to mankind from the services of our departed friend, let me request your attention for a few moments longer, while I endeavor to pourtray more distinctly the leading features of his character. The predominant property of his mind, intellectually considered, appeared to me to be a strong and masculine understanding, copious in its resources, versatile in its operations, and eminently prompt in its decisions. He saw with a rapid glance the different bearings of a subject, and the proper measures to be adopted in the most intricate concerns. He possessed good sense in an exquisite degree, rarely, if ever, misled by the illusions of imagination, either in himself or others. To this was united a warmth and vivacity of temperament, which made business his delight, action his element, accompanied with a resolution in his pursuits not to be relaxed by fatigue, nor damped by discouragements, nor retarded by difficulties. To resolve and to execute, or at least to

make a vigorous attempt, were with him the same thing. He joined in an eminent degree the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo;* none more inflexible in his purposes, none more conciliating in his manners. Without losing a particle of his dignity, without meanness, artifice, or flattery, he knew how to adapt himself to all sorts of society, and was equally acceptable in the character of the saint, the sage, and the cheerful, engaging companion. By his amenity of manners and benignity of mind, he smoothed the asperity of contradiction, and left to the machine of public business the least possible friction.

It is almost unnecessary to state, that he laid the foundation of public confidence in his integrity, which was such that it was not only never sacrificed, but, as far as my information extends, never suspected. They who might differ from him the most on some subjects of a religious or political nature, never called in question the honesty of his intentions. To this he joined, as a necessary instrument of success in active life, an uncommon share of prudence; by which I mean not that timid policy which creeps along the shore without venturing to commit itself to the ocean; which shuns danger without aspiring to conquest. His prudence was of a more generous and enlarged sort; the result not so much of calculation at the moment, as of well regulated passions and established principles. He loved mankind too well to betray, or to speak evil of any. Vanity never made him loquacious, nor pride capricious. Having purified his mind, under the influence of religion, from vanity, pride, and resentment, the chief temptations to imprudence were precluded. His ardent mind left him no leisure for trifling; nor the great object he so steadily pursued, the least disposition to mingle with the details of scandal, or the privacies of domestic life.

The foundation of all these virtues was laid in Christian piety.—It was this which formed the basis of his character, and directed and regulated his pursuits. His piety was warm, manly, enlightened; at an equal distance from the moroseness of bigotry, the weakness of superstition, and the intemperate sallies of enthusiam. His character is a practical illustration of the efficacy of the Bible, of which he was a humble and diligent student, whence he deduced his principles, and formed his maxims. Religion with him was not an occasional feeling, but an habitual element; not a sudden or transient impulse, but a permanent principle, a second nature, producing purity of intention, elevation of mind, and an uninterrupted series of useful exertions. Had he been spared to attend this anniversary, he would, undoubtedly, have delighted us by an impressive exhibition of the excellences of revealed truth. Providence has adopted another mode of instruction; and now in-

vites us to learn from his life, and from his death, the lessons we are no longer permitted to hear from his lips. He being dead, yet speaketh;—he speaks in his writings, he speaks from his tomb, and points to that volume which it is the object of this assembly to circulate, as the source of all his virtues, and of all his greatness. After exhibiting, for our imitation, the lives of the holy men recorded in Scripture—men of whom the world was not worthy, it has pleased God to present to our attention his own, formed on the same model, and replete with the same spirit. The reader of the "Scripture Characters" will be powerfully impelled to copy their example, by the reflection that there are few of their excellences which their Biographer did not attain; that they were shewn in his life with no less advantage than in his writings; and that in his most popular work he did nothing more than inculcate by his pen, what he was incessantly enforcing by his practice.

The loss which the church of Christ has sustained by the extinction of such a luminary is great; the loss to this populous town and neighborhood irreparable. Ages may revolve ere a similar calamity occurs. The shepherd is torn from his flock; the spiritual father from his children; the sage counsellor, the patron of the poor and the destitute, and the great example of the power of religion, whose very countenance could not be beheld without tender veneration, is no more. The name of Robinson will long combine with the mention of this place a train of solemn emotion, and the stranger will indulge a pious curiosity in inspecting the spot where he dwelt, and the church where he exercised his ministry.

We knew the precarious tenure by which we possessed him, in common with all other blessings; we knew he was mortal; but notwithstanding we received repeated warnings by a succession of attacks, few had sufficient fortitude steadily to realize the approaching event. When the intelligence was circulated through the town, "Mr. Robinson is dead," "Mr. Robinson is dead," it was a thunder clap; it produced a sensation of dismay and astonishment, as though we scarcely believed to be possible, what we knew to be certain; and such an air of desolation and sorrow was impressed upon the countenance of the inhabitants, that a stranger must have perceived they had sustained no ordinary calamity. It was such as no event could have produced, but the removal of a saint and a prophet. Whoever wishes to learn how much piety dignifies a character, how much sainted worth, in its power over the heart, preponderates over every other species of eminence, let him turn to this scene, and compare the tears of a populous neighborhood with the unmeaning decorations of funereal grandeur. None spoke of his virtues, none was eloquent in his praise; every heart was oppressed with a sense of its loss.

I cannot close this address without remarking, that the possession of such a man as Mr. Robinson incurs a proportionable weight of responsibility, and that the time is approaching when it will be inquired what improvement we have derived from the exercise of such talents, and the exhibition of such an example.

It is incumbent on his hearers especially to reflect, that he who watched for souls is gone to give an account, not only of the principles on which *he* conducted, but of the reception *they* gave to his embassy, and that against the impenitent and unbelieving, he is compelled to be a swift witness before God. His warning voice, his pathetic appeals and expostulations, will be heard no more; but his record is on high, and the ministry he so long exercised among us, will infallibly be a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. His life was not so properly employed, as consumed, in the incessant labor to bring sinners to repentance, and awful will be the doom of those who persist in rejecting the overtures of mercy, the word of reconciliation, dispensed with such admirable zeal, ability, and address.

To the pastoral cares, studies, and instructions of this most eminent servant of God, death has put a final termination; but the enjoyment of such a ministry, and even the opportunity of witnessing such an example, will form a conspicuous feature in our probation, and be replete with consequences which stretch into eternity.

Permit me to indulge one more reflection; the life and ministry of this great man of God affords a demonstration of the futility of the clamor which is raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith; as though it tended to relax the obligations to virtue, and to annul the commands of God. Who ever insisted on this doctrine more constantly, or urged its importance more earnestly than he? And where amongst its opponents shall we discover indications of similar usefulness? Through a period of more than forty years he employed himself in beating down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, in evincing the impossibility of being accepted on the footing of our own works, and in directing men of every description to seek for pardon in the blood of the cross. If there were any one topic on which he delighted to dwell more than others, this was, unquestionably, the topic.

To his manly and unsophisticated understanding it was evident to a demonstration, that repentance must be grafted on humility, and that there was no room to apprehend his hearers would be tempted to contemn the authority, in consequence of being abased before the majesty of God. He was also perfectly convinced that the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, was the only effectual balm for afflicted consciences. On these principles he conducted his

ministry for near half a century, and we may challenge his enemies (if there be any remaining) to deny that its fruits were most salutary. If the apostolic doctrine, which affirms that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, possess the tendency to licentiousness which its opponents ascribe to it, that tendency could not have failed to operate under a course of instruction so long continued, and of which the tenet in question formed so distinguishing a feature. "By their fruits ye shall know them; men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles."

To conclude; the fittest improvement we can make of the melancholy event we are now deploring, will be a serious attention to the exhortation of St. Paul, addressed to primitive Christians on the loss of eminent pastors:—"Remember them which have had the rule over you; and, considering the end of their conversation, imitate their faith."

AN

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC,

ON AN

IMPORTANT SUBJECT,

CONNECTED WITH

THE RENEWAL OF THE CHARTER

OF THE

EAST INDIA COMPANY.

ADDRESS.

As the subject of the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company is shortly to come before Parliament, with a view to a final decision, it is presumed that it will not be deemed impertinent to invite the attention of the Legislature to a particular connected with that subject, which is judged of high importance. The point to which we refer, respects the propriety of inserting a clause in the new Charter, authorizing the peaceable dissemination of Christian principles in India. For want of such a provision, the Missionaries who have lately visited that country, have been under the necessity of going there by the circuitous route of America, besides meeting with considerable obstructions in their attempts to settle, and being exposed to much vexation and interruption in their quiet efforts to plant the Christian faith. It must surely be considered as an extraordinary fact, that in a country under the government of a people professing Christianity, *that* religion should be the only one that is discountenanced and suppressed.

That the most complete toleration should be extended to the various modes of belief prevailing in those remote dependencies of our empire, and that none of the inhabitants should be subjected to the slightest inconvenience on account of their adherence to the religious system of their forefathers, is readily admitted; nor would any event give more serious concern to the writer of this address, than an interference with that right of private judgement which he deems an inalienable prerogative of human nature. But for a Christian nation to give a decided preference to polytheism and idolatry, by prohibiting the dissemination of a purer faith, and thus employ its powers in suppressing the truth, and prolonging the existence of the most degrading and deplorable superstitions, is a line of conduct equally repugnant to the dictates of religion, and the maxims of sound policy. To oppose by force the propagation of revealed truth, from any worldly considerations whatever, is such a sacrifice of right to expediency, as can be justified on

no principles but what will lead to the subversion of all morality and religion.

If Christianity be a communication from Heaven, to oppose its extension is *to fight against God;* an impiety which, under every possible combination of circumstances, must expect a severe rebuke; but the guilt of which is inconceivably aggravated, when the opposition proceeds from the professors of that very religion. We have no example in the history of the world of such a conduct; we have no precedent of a people prohibiting the propagation of their own faith; a species of intolerance exposed not only to the objections which lie in common against all restraints upon conscience, but to a train of absurdities peculiar to itself, at the same time that it imposes a character of meanness on the ruling powers, by the virtual confession it includes, that they have either no religion, or a religion of which they are ashamed. As the equality of all religions, the distinguishing tenet of deism, is alike repugnant to the dictates of reason, and the oracles of truth, so it is ill calculated to conciliate the esteem of Eastern nations, on whom it can have no other effect than to desecrate the British name, by depriving it of the veneration which nature, unsophisticated by impiety, has inseparably connected with sentiments of religious belief. Powerfully impressed as they are with religious principles and prejudices, however erroneous, we can scarcely adopt a more effectual expedient for securing their contempt and abhorrence, than an avowed indifference to whatever concerns that momentous subject.

It is an undeniable fact, that no persons have been so popular in India, as the men who have exerted themselves with the most steady and persevering zeal in the dissemination of Christian principles; of which we have a striking example in the excellent Schwartz, for many years a Missionary on the coast of Coromandel, who, by his wise and benevolent conduct, rendered, on various occasions, the most essential service to the British interests, and became the object of the enthusiastic attachment of the natives.*

The attempt to propagate Christianity in India is not a new experiment; it has been now tried for more than a century; it received the warmest support of George the First, of illustrious memory, as well as of the then Archbishop of Canterbury; and in the hands of Ziegenbalgius, and his successors, was crowned with distinguished success.† Similar attempts have been more recently made in Ben-

* See the Reports of the Society at Bartlett's Buildings for promoting Christian Knowledge.

† See the excellent Letters from his Majesty and the Archbishop, addressed to Ziegenbalgius, in Buchanan's Ecclesiastical Researches.

gal, and the adjacent provinces; and several Christian societies have been planted by the labors of Missionaries in those parts of India. It deserves particular attention, that no inconvenience, not even the slightest, has arisen from these enterprises; and that whatever agitation has been witnessed among the natives at different times, the propagation of Christianity has never been the cause, or even the pretext. When intelligence of the insurrection at Vellore reached England, there were not wanting persons who endeavored to ascribe it to the jealousy and uneasiness excited by the efforts of Missionaries; but no attempt could be more unsuccessful, since, in the course of a most accurate investigation of the circumstances connected with that event, we have it, on the authority of Lord Teignmouth, that not even the name of a Missionary was mentioned. It arose from causes totally distinct. Thus have we the experience of more than a century to justify the conclusion, that nothing is to be feared for the tranquillity of India from the operations of Missionaries, subject, as they must ever be, to the control of the constituted authorities.

The number of natives who profess Christianity is not small nor inconsiderable. The disciples of Schwartz and his successors on the Eastern side of the peninsula, amount to fifty thousand; and the Syrian Christians, on the coast of Malabar, to several hundred thousands; the greater part of them converted from the Bramins, and the higher classes. They have subsisted there from the fifth century, are in possession of one hundred and nineteen churches, some of them sumptuous and splendid edifices; and their superior elevation of character and purity of manners are attested, on the most respectable authority, to be such as the possession of Christian faith might be expected to inspire.* In addition to this, translations of the New Testament, in almost all the vernacular dialects of India, have been recently circulated, and a considerable number of the natives are assiduously and constantly employed in preaching the gospel; so that it is too late to think of checking its career: the possession it has taken of the public mind will necessarily render all such attempts impracticable. The only question which remains to be decided, is, whether its further propagation shall be left solely in the hands of natives, or whether intelligent and respectable Europeans who come more immediately into contact with the British government, and in whose prudence and experience greater confidence may be reposed, shall be allowed to superintend its movements. The good seed having struck its root too deep ever to be extirpated, the only alternative is, either to leave it to its spontaneous growth, aided by the labor

* See the interesting narrative of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian Christians, in his Ecclesiastical Researches.

of Hindoos, or to place it under a more skilful and enlightened cultivation.

Though strangers to the theory, the inhabitants of Hindostan have been long familiarized to the practice of toleration. In no part of the world is there a greater variety of sects, or more contrariety in the modes of religious belief, subsisting without the slightest disturbance; even the grand division of the natives into Hindoos and Mahometans has continued for ages, without interruption to the public harmony.

But if nothing is to be feared from the dissemination of Christian principles in India, the advantages resulting from it, whether we consult the interest of the natives, or our own, are too obvious to require to be enumerated, and too important to be overlooked. With respect to its aspect on the natives, will it be contended that a more powerful instrument can be devised for meliorating and raising their character, than grafting upon it the principles of our holy religion, which, wherever it prevails, never fails to perfect whatever is good, and to correct whatever is evil, in the human constitution; and to which Europe is chiefly indebted for those enlightened views, and that high sense of probity and honor, which distinguish it so advantageously in a comparison with Asiatic nations? The prevalence of Christianity every where marks the boundary which separates the civilized from the barbarous or semi-barbarous parts of the world; let but this boundary be extended, and the country included within its limits may be considered as redeemed from the waste, and prepared to receive the precious seeds of civilization and improvement. Independently of eternal prospects, it may be safely affirmed, that polytheism and idolatry draw after them such a train of absurd and dismal consequences, as to be quite incompatible with the due expansion of the human intellect, and necessarily to prevent the operations of reason from reaching their maturity and perfection. Wherever Christianity prevails, mankind are uniformly progressive; it communicates that just manner of thinking upon the most important subjects, which, extending its influence thence to every department of speculative and moral truth, inspires a freedom of inquiry and an elevation of sentiment, which raise the disciples of Revelation immeasurably above the level of unassisted nature.

The Hindoo superstition is characterized by a puerile extravagance of conception, as hostile to the cultivation of reason, as the enormity of its practices is revolting to humanity. It oppresses the former by its gigantic absurdities; it extinguishes the latter by the cruelty of its rites. The annual destruction of female infants in Guzarat and Kutch is estimated at fifteen or twenty thousand.*

* See Moore's Hindoo Infanticide.

Till lately, it had been the custom from time immemorial to immolate, at the island of Saugor, and at other places esteemed holy, on the banks of the Ganges, human victims, or to destroy them by sharks. From a late investigation, it appears that the number of women who sacrifice themselves on the funeral pile of their husbands within thirty miles of Calcutta, is, on an average, upwards of two hundred.* A multitude of courtesans are uniformly attached to the principal temples; and the most obscene symbols exhibited to inflame the passions of their votaries.†

While the history of all times and nations evinces the inseparable alliance of impurity and cruelty with the worship of idols, is it consistent with the dictates of humanity, not merely to witness these enormities without attempting to correct them, but to oppose the communication of the only remedy which is capable of effecting a cure?

The base venality, together with the spirit of artifice and intrigue, which distinguish the natives of Hindostan, have rendered it the theatre of perpetual revolutions, robbed its native governments of every principle of stability, and rendered poisonings, assassinations, and treachery, expedients so constantly resorted to by the parties in conflict, that it is impossible to peruse its history without shuddering. To affirm that there is nothing in their superstitions calculated to correct these vices, is saying little, when, in fact, they derive a powerful sanction from the maxims of their religion, and from the character of their gods. There is not one of their deities portrayed in their Shasters, whose moral character is tolerably correct. How much Christianity is wanted to exalt the sentiments, and purify the principles of this corrupt and effeminate race, is too obvious to need to be insisted on.

That their conversion is practicable, is ascertained beyond controversy by the success which has already attended the experiment; that no apprehensions are to be entertained for the permanence of British power, in consequence of the attempt, is manifest from experience; that to consult the welfare of the subject is the first duty of the sovereign, and the chief distinction betwixt the exercise of legitimate authority and the operation of lawless tyranny, will not be disputed in an enlightened age; and that the Christian religion is the greatest blessing we have received, the most precious boon we can bestow, none but infidels will deny. It surely will not be asserted, that we are under less obligation to communicate a good, because that good may be traced to

* See Buchanan's Memoir, p. 96, Appendix. In a Letter lately received from Dr. Carey, he estimates the whole number of women annually sacrificed throughout India at ten thousand.

† See Sonnerat's Voyage aux Indes et a la Chine, p. 219.

the immediate interposition of Heaven, or because it contains the seed and germ of eternal felicity. He who believes the Bible, must know that the heathen are to be given to Christ for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, and that therefore to "forbid his being preached to the Gentiles that they may be saved," is an attempt to contravene the purposes of the Most High, equally impotent and presumptuous. "Let the potsherds strive against the potsherds of the earth, but woe unto him who striveth with his Maker." Such conduct, persevered in, must infallibly draw down the judgements of God on the people to whose infatuated counsels it is to be ascribed. Whoever considers the aspect of the times, must be invincibly prejudiced not to discern the symptoms of a peculiar crisis, the distinguishing features of which, are the rapid subversion of human institutions, and the advancement of the kingdom of God. "The stone cut out without hands has already fallen upon the image, and made it like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor;" the next event we are to look for in the order of Providence, is its enlarging itself, "till it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth." If there ever was a period when the propagation of the true religion might be resisted with impunity, that period is passed; and the Master of the universe is now addressing the greatest potentates in the language of an ancient oracle:—"Be wise now, ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth." Encompassed as we are with the awful tokens of a presiding and avenging Providence, dissolving the fabrics of human wisdom, extinguishing the most ancient dynasties, and tearing up kingdoms by their roots, it would be the height of infatuation any longer to oppose the reign of God, whose purposes will pursue their career, in spite of the efforts of human policy, which must either yield their co-operation, or be broken by its force.

All that is desired, on this occasion, is simply that the word of God may be permitted to have free course. Whether it be consistent with sound policy for the British government to employ any part of its resources in aid of the cause of Christianity in India, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss, while its friends confine their views to a simple toleration, and request merely that its teachers may not be harassed or impeded in their attempts to communicate instruction to the natives. Before such a liberty can be withheld, the principles of toleration must be abandoned; nor will it be practicable to withhold it without exciting a sanguinary persecution; where men are to be found who will eagerly embrace the crown of martyrdom rather than relinquish the performance of what appears to them a high and awful duty. And what a spectacle will it exhibit for a Christian government to

employ force in the *support* of idolatry, and the *suppression* of truth.

Instead of dwelling on the necessary effects of such a measure, let us consider for a moment the beneficial consequences likely to result from an opposite mode of conduct. On that improvement of character which the cordial reception of revealed truth cannot fail to operate, it will be easy to graft some of the habits and institutions of European nations, advancing gradually through an interminable series of social order and happiness. Under the fostering hand of religion, reason will develope her resources, and philosophy mature her fruits. Nor will the advantages accruing to the British interests, from a change so salutary, be less certain, or less important. The possession of the same faith will occasion such an approximation of the habits and sentiments of the natives to our own, as will render the union firm by rendering it cordial. While a total opposition in their views on the most important points subsists betwixt the sovereign and the subjects, while objects adored by the one are held in contempt and abhorrence by the other, they may be artificially connected, but it is impossible they should be united; it is rather a juxtaposition of inanimate parts, than an union of minds. In such a situation the social tie wants that cementing principle which is requisite to give it strength and stability; it is a strained and unnatural position, in which things are held contrary to their native bent; in which authority is upheld merely by force, without deriving support from that sympathy of congenial sentiment, which forms its truest basis. Hence the precarious tenure by which European states have successively held dominion in India, where all has been submitted to the arbitration of the sword; where, the moment force has been withdrawn or relaxed, authority has ceased, and each, in its turn, has gained a transient ascendency, none a firm and tranquil possession. In order to obviate the mischiefs arising from such a state of things, it is extremely desirable, providing it be practicable, to impart to our subjects in the East, some principle which shall draw them into closer contact with the ruling power; and what principle equally operative and efficient with the possession of a common religion? Though the universal diffusion of Christianity over India will probably be a work of time, its influence in strengthening the social compact by augmenting the attachment of the natives, will be uniformly progressive; and while external tranquillity is secured by the superiority of our policy and our arms, we shall every year be making our way into their hearts; we shall be establishing an interior dominion, and may confidently reckon on the unshaken fidelity of every Christian convert. This is not mere conjecture; for in all the trying vicissitudes experienced by

the British interests in India, the Hindoo Christians have invariably approved themselves our firmest friends and abettors.

Though the writer of this is afraid of being tedious, there is another consideration connected with the present subject, which he deems of too much importance not to be mentioned. The possession of India, it is well known, is an object to which our enemies are looking with eager desire; accompanied with jealousy at that splendor which the vastness of our Oriental empire confers on the British name and character. No efforts will they deem too great, no sacrifices too expensive, to rob us of so bright a jewel. What events may arise hereafter to facilitate the accomplishment of their wishes, it is beyond the power of human sagacity to conjecture; one thing is certain, that nothing will oppose a more formidable obstacle to their designs than the diffusion of Christianity. They who have received that inestimable blessing, will infallibly cling with ardor to the people to whom they are indebted for it. They will feel more than a natural affection to the country which has opened to them the prospect of immortality, and nourished them with the bread of life. In all the struggles to retain or to acquire dominion in the East, the Christian portion of the population will, to a man, be the zealous partisans of Great Britain; a firm and immoveable band, whose devoted attachment will in some measure compensate for their inferiority of number. In this species of policy too, in this most unexceptionable mode of conciliating esteem, we shall have nothing to apprehend from the intrigues of our rivals, who are equally indisposed and disqualified to engage in such an enterprise.

If we consider what may be the probable intention of Providence in opening so extensive a communication betwixt Europe and the most ancient seats of idolatry, and more especially of subjecting such immense territories in the East to the British arms, we can conceive no end more worthy of the Deity in these momentous changes than to facilitate the propagation of true religion.

Our acquisition of power there, has been so rapid, so extensive, and so disproportioned to the limits of our native empire, that there are few events in which the interposition of Providence may be more distinctly traced. From the possession of a few forts in different parts of the coast, which we were permitted to erect for the protection of our commerce, we have risen in the course of less than half a century, to a summit of power, whence we exert a direct dominion over fifty millions, and a paramount influence over a hundred millions of men. By an astonishing train of events, a large portion of the population of the Oriental world has been subjected to the control of an island placed in the extremities of the West of Europe. Kingdoms have fallen after

kingdoms, and provinces after provinces, with a rapidity which resembles the incidents of a romance, rather than the accustomed order of political events. It is remarkable, too, that this career of conquest has uniformly directed its steps towards those parts of the earth, and to those only, which are the primeval seats of pagan idolatry; forming an intimate connexion betwixt the most enlightened of Christian nations, and the victims of the most inveterate and deplorable system of superstition mankind have ever witnessed. As we must be blind not to discern the finger of God in these transactions, it behoves us to consider for what purposes we are lifted to so high a pre-eminence.

It is certainly not to be ascribed to a blind predilection, which aims at no other object than to gratify ambition, by extending the power, and augmenting the grandeur of Great Britan; a motive too puerile to satisfy the requisitions of human reason, much more to limit the views of an eternal mind.

The possession of sovereignty over extensive kingdoms is a sacred trust, for which nations are not less responsible than individuals, a delegation from the supreme fountain of power; and as the unalterable laws of nature forbid us to confound men with things, or to forget the reciprocal obligations subsisting betwixt the sovereign and the subject, we can scarcely be guilty of a greater crime than to consider the latter as merely subservient to the interests of the former. Every individual of the immense population subjected to our sway, has claims on our justice and benevolence which we cannot with impunity neglect; the wants and sufferings of every individual utter a voice which goes to the heart of humanity. In return for their allegiance, we owe them protection and instruction, together with every effort to meliorate their condition, and improve their character. It is but fair to acknowledge, that we have not been wholly insensible to these claims, and that the extension of our power has been hitherto highly beneficial. But why, in the series of improvements, has Christianity been neglected? Why has the communication of the greatest good we have to bestow, been hitherto fettered and restrained; and while every modification of idolatry, not excepting the bloody and obscene orgies of Juggernaut, has received support, has every attempt to instruct the natives in the things which belong to their peace, been suppressed? It will surely appear surprising to posterity, that a nation, glorying in the purity of its faith as its highest distinction, should suffer its transactions in the East to be characterized by a spirit of infidelity, as though it were imagined the foundations of empire could be laid only in apostasy and impiety; at a moment, too, when Europe, convulsed to its centre, beholds these frantic erections swept with the besom of destruction. Their astonish-

ment will be the more excited, when they compare our conduct in this instance with the unprecedented exertions we are making for the diffusion of religious knowledge in other directions; with the operations of the Bible Society, which, formed for the sole purpose of conveying the oracles of God to all quarters, has risen to an importance that entitles it to be regarded as a national concern; in which statesmen, nobles, and prelates, have enrolled their names, emulous of the honor of advancing to the utmost the noble design of the institution; with the Bartlett's Buildings Society, employed for upwards of a century in attempts to convert the natives of Hindostan, which includes in the list of its members every bishop, and every dignified ecclesiastic in the realm; with the numerous translations going on in all the dialects of the East, to which the learned, both in Europe and in Asia, are looking with eager expectation. When posterity shall compare the conduct we are reprobating with these facts, how great their astonishment, to find the piety of the nation has suffered itself to lie prostrate at the feet of a few individuals, the open or disguised enemies of the faith of Jesus!

It is impossible, in connexion with the circumstances to which we have adverted, to mistake the real sentiments of the British people, or not to perceive that the illustrious associations already mentioned are entitled, on a question of this nature, to be considered as its genuine and legitimate organ.

It ought never to be forgotten, in the consideration of this subject, that it is inseparably connected with liberty of conscience. Religious toleration implies not merely the freedom of thought, which no human power can restrain, and which equally subsists under the most tyrannical and the most enlightened governments; it comprehends, also, the freedom of communication, and the right of discussion, within the limits of sober and dispassionate argument. He who is impressed with a conviction of the importance of the Christian verities, it is reasonable to suppose, will be anxious to communicate them; he will probably feel as St. Paul did in a similar situation, whose spirit was stirred within him when he beheld Athens wholly given up to idolatry; he may be touched with so strong a commiseration for the victims of religious imposture, and so powerful a sense of the duty of attempting to correct it, as to be ready to adopt the language employed on another occasion,—"We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

None but the determined enemy of truth and decency will deny that such a state of mind is possible, or that it is more allied to virtue than to vice. If at this juncture, a superior power interposes, and says, you shall not impart your conviction, however

strong; you shall not attempt to dispel delusions the most gross, or correct enormities the most flagrant, though no other means are thought of but calm expostulation and argument; in what, I would ask, does such an interference differ from persecution? Here is conscience on one side, an enlightened conscience, as all Christians must confess, and force on the other; which is precisely the position in which things are placed by every instance of persecution. If Christianity was ever persecuted, if the martyrologies of all times and nations are not to be exploded as mere fiction and romance, this is persecution, and persecution of a most portentous character, being directed, in support of a system we detest, against the religion by which we expect to be saved. Here are a people, indignant posterity will exclaim, who profess subjection to the Saviour of the world, and hold in their hands the oracles which foretell the universal extension of his dominion, who yet make it a crime to breathe his name in pagan lands, and employ their power to fence out the scene of his future triumphs, and render it, as far as possible, inaccessible to his religion. With what efficacious sincerity, and edifying fervor, must this people have prayed, "thy kingdom come!"—Admirable successors of the Constantines and the Charlemagnes of a former age! Faithful stewards of the manifold gifts of God!

When the parallel betwixt the conduct of modern missionaries and the first preachers of the gospel is insisted on, it is usual to attempt to annul the conclusion deduced from the comparison, by remarking that the latter were possessed of miraculous powers, to which the former make no pretensions. That this circumstance occasions a real disparity in the means of insuring success, will be readily acknowledged; but that it makes any difference whatever in the right of imparting instruction, will not hastily be conceded. Had such supernatural interpositions never accompanied the publication of the gospel, it had wanted its credentials, and been essentially defective in the proof of its divine origination. It was necessary for a new dispensation, when first ushered into the world, to be accompanied with a direct appeal to the senses, with the visible signatures of a divine hand; and it is the glory of our holy religion to have possessed them in a variety and splendor that astonished mankind, and laid a foundation for the faith and obedience of all succeeding ages. At its *entrance*, such an economy was requisite to prepare the way. But when these miraculous occurrences, after enduring the severest scrutiny, under circumstances the most favorable to investigation, were committed to writing, and formed a compact body of external evidences; when the supernatural origin of the Christian faith had taken its place amongst the most indubitable of recorded facts, it was no longer

necessary to be continually repeating the same proofs; nor consistent with the Majesty of heaven, to be ever laying the foundation afresh. It was time to assume the truth of religion as a thing proved.

As we were none of us eye-witnesses of the miracles wrought in the primitive ages, but rest our belief on historical documents, it is not impossible, as far as the truth of Christianity is concerned, to lay open to pagans the sources of our conviction, and by that means to place them in nearly the same situation with ourselves; to say nothing of that internal evidence which "commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This is actually the mode in which the light of Revelation has been chiefly diffused since the cessation of miraculous gifts; which, in the opinion of some, terminated with the Apostles, in the judgement of others, were continued through the first three centuries, but are universally allowed to have ceased long before the conversion of the northern and western parts of Europe. Did the disciples of St. Columba, who spread Christianity through the kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, owe their success to miraculous powers? Did St. Austin and his associates, who laid the foundations of the religious establishments in England, make such pretensions?

To demand miracles in order to justify the propagation of Christianity in pagan countries, is to attribute to it a state of perpetual weakness and pupilage; it is to cancel all that is past, to accuse the most illustrious missionaries of enthusiasm, and the faith of our forefathers of folly and credulity. The principle we are attempting to expose, not content with inflicting a stigma on a particular sect or party, involves the whole Christian community established in these realms, in the foul reproach of being the illegitimate offspring of fanaticism, or imposture. It is only necessary for us to place ourselves in imagination at that period when the foundation of the church was laid in this and in other European countries, to perceive that the same objections which are made to the present efforts of missionaries, apply with equal force to those that are past. They who first exhibited the mysteries of the cross to the view of our rude ancestors, were equally destitute of miraculous powers with ourselves. But they felt the power of the world to come; they were deeply impressed with the dignity and excellence of the Christian dispensation, and touched with a passionate regard for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. These were the motives which impelled them forward; these the weapons of their warfare. The ridicule attempted to be poured on men of the same principles and character, engaged in the same object, is, in fact, reflected on these their predecessors, and is precisely a repetition of the conduct of the impenitent Jews, who

honored the memory, and built the sepulchres of departed, while they were imbuing their hands in the blood of living prophets. We collect, with eager veneration, the names and achievements of the first heralds of the gospel; we dwell with exultation on the heroic fortitude they displayed in encountering the opposition of fierce barbarians, amidst their efforts to reclaim them from a sanguinary superstition, and to imbue their minds with the principles of an enlightened piety. We look up to them as to a superior order of beings, and in the character of the instructors of mankind in the sublimest lessons, entitled to a distinction above all Greek, above all Roman fame; yet, with ineffable absurdity, and a most contemptible littleness of mind, if it please Providence, at distant intervals, to raise up a few congenial spirits, we are prepared to treat them with levity and scorn. It is the misfortune of some men to labor under an incapacity of discerning living worth;—a sort of moral virtuosi, who form their estimate of characters, as the antiquarian of coins, by the rust of antiquity.

> Urit enim fulgore suo, qui prægravat artes
> Infra se positas; extinctas amabitur idem. HORACE.

I would not be understood, in the remarks made on this part of the subject, to explode the expectation of the renewal of miraculous agency; which some of the most able divines have unquestionably formed, from a perusal of the prophetic oracles. The inference I would wish to establish is simply this, that we are not justified in neglecting the means of propagating the truth we already possess, by the absence of higher succor; and that it would ill become the Christian world to abandon the attempts to convert the inhabitants of pagan countries, in deference to the clamors of men, who demand miracles merely because they believe they will not be vouchsafed, and decry the ordinary methods of procedure because they are within our reach, and have already been crowned with success. To such the language of the prophet Amos may be addressed with propriety;—"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you! The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light."

AN

ADDRESS

ON

THE STATE OF SLAVERY

IN THE

WEST INDIA ISLANDS.

ADDRESS.

That slavery is the most deplorable condition to which human nature can be reduced, is too evident to require the labor of proof. By subjecting one human creature to the absolute control of another, it annihilates the most essential prerogative of a reasonable being, which consists in the power of determining his own actions, in every instance in which they are not injurious to others. The right improvement of this prerogative is the source of all the virtue and happiness of which the human race is susceptible. Slavery introduces the most horrible confusion, since it degrades human beings from the denomination of persons to that of things; and by merging the interests of the slave in those of the master, he becomes a mere appendage to the existence of another, instead of preserving the dignity which belongs to a reasonable and accountable nature. Knowledge and virtue are foreign to his state; ignorance the most gross, and dispositions the most depraved, are requisite to reduce him to a level with his condition.

But degrading as slavery is, in its mildest form, that species of it which prevails in our West India colonies is of the very worst description, far less tolerable than that which subsisted in Greece and Rome during the reign of Paganism. It would be difficult to find a parallel to it in any age or nation, with the exception of those unhappy persons who are carried captive by the piratical states of Barbary. Scourged, branded, and sold at the discretion of their masters, the slaves in our West India Islands are doomed to a life of incessant toil, for the benefit of those from whom they receive no recompense whatever; they are indebted for their principal subsistence to the cultivation of small portions of land allotted them under the name of provision grounds; and the time chiefly allowed for that purpose, is the day which the laws of all Christian states have devoted to rest. On that day, instead of being assembled to listen to the oracles of God, and to imbibe the consolations of piety, they are necessitated to work for their living, and to dispose of the produce of their labor at the public market.

The natural consequence is, that the far greater part of them are as ignorant of the first principles of Christianity, as though they had remained in the land of their forefathers.

They are driven in the field by the cart whip. They are followed by a driver, with this dreadful instrument constantly in his hand, with which he is empowered to inflict, at his own discretion a certain number of lashes on their backs, with no exception whatever in favor of the softer sex. During the four or five months of their harvest, many of them are compelled to protract their labor through half the night, or through the whole of each alternate night. They are liable to be removed, at the will of their master, to the remotest parts of the island, or to be transported into other islands. The ties of kindred may be violently torn asunder, and the mother and children assigned to different purchasers, and separated to distant parts. The ordinance of marriage is scarcely known among them; while the most unrestrained licentiousness and profligacy of manners, as well in their intercourse with each other, as with the whites, is openly indulged.

The practice of emancipation, which has long prevailed to a great extent, and been followed by the happiest effects, in the old Spanish colonies, has hitherto been discountenanced by the laws of many of our colonies, and is still loaded with such heavy fines in some of them, as almost to amount to a prohibition. The effect of such regulations is unquestionably to confer perpetuity on the present system, and extinguish in the breast of the negroes the hope of the enjoyment of freedom.

Nothing was wanting to complete the misery of such a state, except to attach impunity to the atrocities which the unlimited subjection of the weak to the strong is ever sure to produce; and this is amply provided for by that regulation, adopted in our colonies, which excludes the testimony of a negro against a white inhabitant. In consequence of this law, the vilest miscreant may inflict whatever cruelties he pleases on the wretched blacks, provided he takes care that no white person be present. There are laws, it is true, which constitute the murder of a negro a capital offence, and which limit the measure of his punishment; but, as if for the very purpose of rendering them nugatory and ridiculous, conviction is made to depend on a circumstance attending the perpetration of crimes, which it is most easy to exclude. Thus, in opposition to the genius of all enlightened legislation, the greatest facilities are presented to oppression, the greatest impediments thrown in the way of detection; and, in all that relates to the treatment of slaves, the voice of truth is silenced, evidence suppressed, the claims of justice studiously defeated, and the redress of the most atrocious injuries rendered next to impossible.

There is another particular in the state of the laws respecting negroes, too remarkable to be passed over in silence. It is the obvious dictate of justice, and the practice of all civilized states, that, till guilt is proved, innocence shall be presumed; and that the *onus probandi*—the obligation of adducing evidence—shall rest with the accuser in the first instance. In the West India islands, a principle the reverse of this is established; and every negro, or man of color, though free, is *presumed* to be a slave, and liable to be treated as such, unless he can furnish documentary evidence of his freedom. The presumption is always taken against him; so that if he loses his certificate of freedom, or it is stolen from him, it is at the option of any person to commit him to jail as a runaway; and if he cannot prove his freedom, the law requires him to be sold, and thus replunges him into the horrors of slavery. By this means many are deprived of their freedom; and the danger of incurring that calamity is suspended over the heads of the innocent.

It is no small aggravation of the cruelty of this system, that its unhappy victims have not been exposed to it as the punishment of crime, but by the violence of ruffians, who, having traversed the ocean in quest of human prey, forcibly tore them from their native shores, and the embraces of their dearest relatives, in order to expose them to sale in a distant quarter of the globe. The forms of judicial inquiry, the examination of witnesses, the proof of guilt, and the sentence of a judge, were not the precursors of this most dire calamity; it was the assault of brutal violence on helpless weakness and unsuspecting innocence; it was the grasp of the marauder and the assassin, hurrying away his victims, amidst shrieks of horror and the piercing accents of despair, which prepared these scenes of woe. These, and the descendants of these, are the persons who compose the black population of our slave colonies. Their number is computed at present at 800,000; and if we direct our view to that portion of the British dominions, we behold the shocking spectacle of nearly a million of our fellow subjects, with no other imputation than that of a darker skin, doomed to a condition, which, were it assigned as the punishment of the greatest guilt, would be accused of immoderate severity. We behold these children of nature, for the purpose chiefly of supplying us with the ingredient which sweetens our repasts, compelled by men, who call themselves Christians, to exhaust to its dregs a more bitter cup than is usually allotted to the greatest adepts in crime.

It is confidently asserted by the advocates of slavery, that the situation of the negroes in our islands is preferable to that of the laboring classes in England. But the falsehood of this assertion

is sufficiently proved by the numerous elopements which take place there; on referring to a very recent Jamaica paper, we observe a list, in one week, of more than a hundred run-away slaves, who had been apprehended and committed to jail; so that the slaves who attempt to escape from their masters in that one island only, must amount annually to a very considerable number. It appears that the far greater part were branded, many of them in different parts of the body; and not a few are designated by their wounds and sores, and by the effects of immoderate punishment. A moment's reflection must convince us, that the condition must be intolerable from which such numbers are continually attempting to escape, at the hazard of tortures and of death.

We are in possession of a religion the communication of which would afford some compensation for the injuries we have inflicted, and let in a ray of hope on the benighted mind. To say that no effectual provision has been made for this purpose, is to assert the smallest part of the truth. The religious instruction of the negroes has not only been neglected, but such regulations introduced, as have rendered it nearly impracticable. The attempts of this sort which have been made, have not resulted in general from any legislative enactment, but merely from the zeal of private individuals, exposed for the most part to the utmost opposition and obloquy; nor will it admit of a doubt, that, but for the seasonable interference of the Government at home, all such proceedings would long since have been suppressed. The Colonial Legislatures have displayed nearly as much aversion to the religious instruction of the slaves, as to the extension of their civil immunities; and, judging from their conduct, we should be tempted to infer, they were no less careful to exclude them from the hope of heaven, than from happiness on earth.

It would be natural to suppose, that such a system could have few charms for the spectator; that the presence of such a mass of degradation and misery would be a source of continual annoyance; and that no exertion would be spared, by those who have it most in their power, to diminish its pressure, and lighten its horrors. On the contrary, the West India colonists view it with the utmost complacency; in their eyes it seems to be a most finished and exquisite specimen of social order; a master-piece of policy; the most precious legacy bequeathed them by their ancestors, which they are bound to maintain inviolate in every part, to defend at the greatest risk, and to transmit unimpaired to future generations. They anticipate with the utmost confidence the perpetual duration of the system, and reprobate every measure which has the remotest tendency to endanger its existence, as the offspring of indescribable folly and wickedness. To such a degree

are their moral perceptions vitiated, that they really believe they have a prescriptive right to be guilty of injustice, to trample on the image of their Maker, to erase his superscription, and to treat that portion of their species which fortune has subjected to their power, as mere beasts of burden, divested of the essential characteristics of humanity. In this instance, impious speculations have been resorted to in palliation of practical enormities; nor have there been wanting those who avow their persuasion that the negro is more nearly allied to the orang-outang, than to the human kind.

Hence it appears, that a state of slavery is in its operation as mischievous to the master as to the slave. If its effects on the latter are more visible in his corporeal structure, in his debased physiognomy, his dejected countenance, his lacerated skin, and not unfrequently in his wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; its effects on the mind of the former are not less perceivable, in the most inveterate prejudice, a pride which spurns the restraints of justice, a violence which is deaf to the dictates of compassion; in a word, in a capricious and uncontrolable self-will, which lays waste all the finer sensibilities of the soul, and renders its possessor too often a rebel to his God, a torment to himself, and a terror to his fellow-creatures.

Sixteen years have now elapsed since the abolition of the slave trade, and during this period few or none of those improvements have taken place in the treatment of slaves, which were expected to result from that measure. At that time it was generally contended, that as the planters would be necessitated thenceforth to keep up the number of their slaves without the aid of fresh importations, this itself would draw after it such an amelioration in the management of them, as would insure the happiest results, without legislative interference. The interests of the proprietors, it was supposed, would so obviously coincide with the dictates of humanity, as to give these the force of law. It is too manifest, however, from the event, that in forming this conclusion we did not take sufficiently into account the short-sightedness of rapacity, the force of habit, the contagion of example, and the incurable propensity of human nature to abuse absolute power, in whatever hands it is placed. The enormities which formerly characterized the slave system, have suffered little or no abatement; all its most odious peculiarites are retained; while, by the just retribution of Providence, the planters are reduced to the utmost embarrassment and distress.

After witnessing such an obstinate adherence to a system, equally injurious to the negroes and to themseves; after every suggestion of improvement has been indignantly rejected, and few or no

efforts made in behalf of the slave population, except by a few benevolent individuals, or by a few verbal enactments, passed with no other view, it is evident from the event, than to elude inquiry, and silence complaint, it would be more than vain, it would be foolish and preposterous, to look for any substantial redress from colonial legislators. *They* are the aggressors; *they* are the authors of the evils we complain of; and how can it be expected they should legislate against themselves? To leave the slaves in *their* hands, what is it less than to recommend the lamb to the protection of the wolf?

Slavery, considered as a perpetual state, is as incapable of vindication as the trade in slaves; they are integral parts of the same system, and, in point of moral estimate, must stand or fall together. If it be unjust to sell men into slavery, who are guilty of no crime, it must be equally so to retain them in that state; the last act of injustice is but the sequel and completion of the first. If the natives of Africa were originally despoiled of their freedom by rapine and violence, no man is entitled to avail himself of the condition to which they are reduced, by compelling them to labor for his benefit; nor is it less evident, that they could not possibly transmit the forfeiture to their children of those rights which they never forfeited for themselves. Thus it appears, that the claims of the planters to hold their negroes in perpetual bondage, is vitiated in its *origin;* and having commenced in an act of injustice, can never acquire the sanction of right.

But here we are most anxious to guard against the misrepresentation of our sentiments. Convinced as we are that negro slavery is most iniquitous in its origin, most mischievous in its effects, and diametrically opposite to the genius of Christianity and of the British Constitution, we are yet far from proposing a sudden revolution. Universal experience shews, that in the body politic, no less than in the natural, inveterate diseases admit only of a slow and gradual cure; and we should deprecate an immediate emancipation almost as much as the planters themselves, from a full conviction that the debasing operation of slavery, long continued, disqualifies its subject for performing the functions, and enjoying the immunities, of a free citizen.

Our object is, in the first place, to produce such an amelioration of their treatment, as shall soften the rigor of their bondage; and, in the next, such a provision for their moral and religious instruction, as, by developing their faculties and improving their character, may ultimately qualify them for the possession of the freedom, of which they have been cruelly deprived. With this view, we wish to see the competency of negro evidence established, as the only efficient check to wanton barbarity; the employment of re-

wards as well as punishments; the instruction of the slaves in the principles of the Christian religion; the uninterrupted enjoyment of the Sabbath; the institution of marriage, and the inviolability of its rights firmly established; the exclusion of the cart-whip from the field of labor; together with the repeal of that abominable law which renders them liable to be sold in execution for the payment of their masters' debts. If, in addition to these most wholesome regulations, facilities were afforded for the purchase of their freedom, similar to those which have been adopted in the old Spanish colonies with the happiest effect, manumissions would be gradually obtained, in such proportion and in such numbers only as would perfectly consist with the security and tranquillity of the colonies. Thus a race of freemen, fitted by their constitution and their habits for the employments of a tropical climate, united with us by civil and religious ties, would rise up in the room of the present wretched victims of oppression—a race, that, having a country to preserve, and rights to defend, would be a source of national strength, instead of inspiring terror and distrust.

The superiority of free labor, in point of emolument, to the labor of slaves, having been demonstrated by such an ample induction of facts that it may be safely classed with the most established maxims of political economy, the practice of gradual emancipation would be of essential benefit to the planters, and greatly augment the value of our West India possessions. Indeed, there cannot be a more cogent proof of the folly of pertinaciously adhering to the present system, than the acknowledged inability to sustain a competition with the growers of sugar in the East Indies. In order to raise the price of East India produce, so as to enable the planter in the West to keep the market, an extra duty is imposed to a large amount, and the people of England are obliged to pay nearly two millions a year more for that article, than would be necessary if a fair competition were allowed; in other words, the inhabitants of Great Britain are assessed to the amount of nearly two millions annually, for no other purpose than to maintain the slave system in the West Indies; and, in opposition to the dictates of humanity, the precepts of religion, and the principles of political economy and impartial justice, we contribute more to perpetuate our own disgrace, than it would be deemed prudent to bestow in the purchase of the greatest blessing. All our plans of domestic improvement, joined to all the efforts which we make for the diffusion of religion and virtue in foreign nations—our Schools, our Bible Societies, and our Missions, justly considered as the peculiar glory of the age—cost us a mere scantling, compared to what is annually devoted to that very pious and benevolent object, the perpetuation of slavery in the West Indies; we

throw mites into the treasury of the sanctuary, and heap ingots on the altar of Moloch.

And why, it is natural to ask, why is it necessary to load the importation of sugar from the East Indies with such heavy duties, in order to enable the growers of the same article in an opposite quarter of the globe, at not one third the distance, to sustain a competition? Purely because the East India sugar is produced by the labor of freemen, the West India by the labor of slaves. The industry of the former is animated by hope, that of the latter depressed by despair; one is sustained by the energies of nature, the other extorted by the mechanical operation of the lash; the former labor for themselves, the latter for their master; and such is the distinction between these two species of industry, that it more than annihilates the local difference between three or four, and twelve thousand miles. Surely the good sense of the nation will at last awake to a perception of this flagrant enormity, and express its impatience at the ignominy and injustice of such an assessment, in that firm and constitutional tone which the Legislature will not despise.

Let us not be discouraged, if in this great enterprise our attempts are not immediately crowned with success. The slave trade, be it remembered, was long upheld by a combination of private interests, in opposition to the remonstrances of reason, humanity, and religion; but it fell at last. Such, unquestionably, will be the fate of slavery. It may, like its twin brother, be supported for a time, by that grand obstruction to all enlightened legislation, the opposition of interested individuals, who may obscure truth by sophistry, and intimidate justice by a formidable array of influence; but it is one of the felicities of a free country, that nothing can be permanent which will not sustain the ordeal of inquiry and the shock of discussion.

We indulge a hope, though the measures of Administration during the last session of Parliament fell far short of our wishes, that they have formed on the whole a correct view of the subject, and that they are not unwilling to receive that support from the expression of the public mind, which a combination of private interests renders necessary. Be this as it may, as we are always answerable for the evils which it is in our power to prevent, and some of the greatest disorders in society have been corrected by the interference of the public, through its constitutional organs, we cannot continue passive spectators of a system, which inflicts interminable degradation and misery on eight hundred thousand of our fellow subjects, without deeply partaking of its guilt.

The scene of their suffering is distant indeed, but not so remote as to exempt them from the operation of our laws. They form

an integral part of the British dominions; and woe to that nation which extends its power to those from whom it withholds its justice! That distance, which did not secure them from spoliation and captivity while in Africa, should not be allowed for a moment to intercept our attention to their welfare and commiseration of their sufferings, now that they are transported to the West Indies. Through the aid of the public voice the Government of the day carried triumphantly in 1807 the great question of the abolition of the slave trade. Let us endeavor, by a simultaneous movement, to strengthen the hands of the present Administration, if, as we hope, they are well disposed; to stimulate them if they are sluggish; and to propel them, at all events, in the right direction, by such a firm and unanimous display of the public sentiment and feeling on this great occasion, as no free government will think it proper to neglect; that we may, though late, make some reparation for the accumulated injuries of ages that are past, and signalize our connexion with Africa by other characters than those of rapine, violence, and blood.

We cannot suppose for a moment that Government will suffer the extraordinary conduct recently displayed by the local authorities of Jamaica, to have any influence in preventing its adoption of such measures for the amelioration of the present system, as justice and humanity may dictate. To be bearded and insulted by persons in their situation, would be mortifying enough, if the ridicule attached to their proceedings did not interfere with more serious emotions. To say that Government has nothing to fear from the West India Islands would be scarcely correct, for we have much to fear; but it is not from their strength, but their weakness, which is such, that, were we to withdraw our support, they would fall like ripe fruit, into the lap of the first invader. They are so much accustomed, it seems, to proceed by the method of intimidation, as to forget their absolute dependence on Great Britain for protection, as well from domestic, as from foreign dangers; nor could we wish them a more cruel revenge, than to leave them to their own resources. If, by adopting such regulations as the humanity and wisdom of Parliament shall prescribe, they can make it clearly appear that their pecuniary interests are affected (which in our opinion will be impossible,) let them by all means receive a suitable compensation; but let us be permitted, at the same time, to express our hope that Government will not be diverted from its course by the growling of a tiger which refuses to quit its prey.

The interference, then, of an enlightened public, to circulate information, to strengthen the hands and second the movements of Government, in this most just enterprise, is imperiously demanded. We cannot sit still, year after year, silent spectators of the

most enormous oppression, exercised within the limits of the British dominions, without partaking of its guilt. We cannot remain silent and inactive, without forgetting who we are, and what we have done; that we are the country which, after a tedious struggle with a host of prejudices arrayed in support of opulent oppression, have overthrown the slave trade, torn it up by the roots, and branded in the eyes of all nations the sale of human flesh, as the most atrocious of social crimes. We must forget that we are the countrymen of Granville Sharp, who, by incredible exertions, succeeded at length in purifying the British soil from this its foulest pollution, and rendered it for ever impossible for a slave to breathe its air. We must sever ourselves from all alliance of spirit with a Wilberforce and a Clarkson, who looked forward to the final emancipation of the negro race as the consummation of their labors, and were sustained in their arduous contest by the joy which that prospect inspired. We must lose sight of still more awful considerations, and forget our great Original, "who hath formed of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth."

ESSAY ON ANTINOMIANISM:

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AS A

PREFACE

TO

"ANTINOMIANISM UNMASKED,"

BY

SAMUEL CHASE, A. M.

ESSAY.

It is with considerable reluctance that I have complied with the request of the highly esteemed author of "Antinomianism Unmasked," by prefixing a short preface; not from the slightest hesitation respecting the excellence of the work itself, but from an aversion to the seeming arrogance of pretending to recommend what might rest so securely on its own merits. The reader, if I am not greatly mistaken, will find in this treatise a chain of close and cogent reasoning from the oracles of God, sufficient to overturn from its foundation the principles which compose the Antinomian heresy; which, he will be at no loss to perceive, are as much opposed to the *grace*, as to the authority, of the great Head of the Church.

The fundamental tenet of the system to which this treatise is opposed, consists in the denial of the *obligation* of believers to obey the precepts of Christ; in supposing that their interest in the merits of the Redeemer releases them from all subjection to his authority; and, as it is acknowledged on all hands, that he is the sole Lord of the Christian dispensation, the immediate consequence is, that, as far as *they* are concerned, the moral government of the Deity is annihilated; that they have ceased to be accountable creatures. But this involves the total subversion of religion; for what idea can we form of a religion in which all the obligations of piety and morality are done away; in which nothing is binding, or imperative on the conscience? We may conceive of a religious code under all the possible gradations of laxness or severity, of its demanding more or less, or of its enforcing its injunctions by penalties more or less formidable; but to form a conception of a system deserving the name of religion, which prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions, seems an impossibility. On this account, it appears to me improper to speak of Antinomianism as a *religious* error; religion, whether true or false, has nothing to do with it; it is

rather to be considered as an attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of Christianity. In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security, and lawless liberty, while the rest of the Christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt and hatred of the most devout and enlightened Christians out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient Pharisees ever more notorious for "trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others."

Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate, and pernicious habit, of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. The only attempt they make to support their miserable system, is to adduce a number of detached and insulated passages of Scripture, forcibly torn from their context, and interpreted with more regard to their sound, than to their meaning, as ascertained by the laws of sober criticism. Could they be prevailed upon to engage in serious, dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation; but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions, than the light of evidence.

As far as they are concerned, my expectation of benefit from the following treatise is far from being sanguine. To others, however, who may be in danger of falling a prey to their seduction, it may prove an important preservative; to the young and inexperienced, it will hold out a faithful warning, by unmasking the deformity, and revealing the danger, of that pretended doctrine of grace, which is employed to annul the obligation of obedience. They will learn from this treatise, that the authority of Christ as a Legislator, is perfectly compatible with his office as the Redeemer, of his people; that the renewal of the soul in true holiness, forms a principal part of the salvation he came to bestow; that the privileges of the evangelical dispensation are inseparably combined with its duties; and that every hope of eternal life is necessarily presumptuous and unfounded, which is not connected with "keeping the commandments of God." They will perceive the beautiful analogy subsisting between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation, and that the redemption wrought out upon

the cross is just as subservient to the spiritual dominion of Christ over his people, as was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the erection of a theocracy in the Holy Land: in a word, they will plainly see that the regal authority of Christ over his Church belongs to the very essence of the evangelical economy, considered as an annunciation of the *Kingdom*, or *Reign* of God.

To trace the progress of Antinomianism, and investigate the steps by which it has gradually attained its fearful ascendency, though an interesting inquiry, would lead me far beyond the limits of this preface. Suffice it to suggest a few circumstances which appear to me to have contributed not a little to that result. When religious parties have been long formed, a certain technical phraseology, invented in order to designate the peculiarities of the respective systems, naturally grows up; what custom has sanctioned, in process of time becomes law, and the slightest deviation from the consecrated diction comes to be viewed with suspicion and alarm. Now the technical language appropriated to the expression of the Calvinistic system in its nicer shades, however justifiable in itself, has, by its perpetual recurrence, narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obselete many modes of expression which the sacred writers indulge without scruple. The latitude with which they express themselves on various subjects has been gradually relinquished, a scrupulous and systematic cast of diction has succeeded to the manly freedom and noble negligence they are accustomed to display; and many expressions employed without hesitation in Scripture, are rarely found, except in the direct form of quotation, in the mouth of a modern Calvinist.

In addition to this, nothing is more usual than for the zealous abettors of a system, with the best intentions, to magnify the importance of its peculiar tenets by hyperbolical exaggerations, calculated to indentify them with the fundamental articles of faith. Thus the Calvinistic doctrines have often been denominated, by divines of deservedly high reputation, *the doctrines of grace;* implying, not merely their truth, but that they constitute the very essence and marrow of the gospel. Hence persons of little reflection have been tempted to conclude, that the zealous inculcation of these comprehends nearly the whole system of revealed truth, or as much of it at least as is of vital importance, and that no danger whatever can result from giving them the greatest possible prominence. But the transition from a partial exhibition of truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one, and he who commences with consigning certain important doctines to oblivion, will generally end in perverting or denying them. The authority of the laws of Christ, his proper dominion over his people, and the

absolute necessity of evangelical obedience in order to eternal life, though perfectly consistent in my apprehension with Calvinism, form no part of it, considered as a separate system. In the systematic mode of instruction they are constantly omitted, or so slightly and sparingly adverted to, that they are gradually lost sight of, and when they are presented to the attention, being supported by no habitual mental associations, they wear the features of a strange and exotic character. They are repelled with disgust and suspicion, not because they are perceived to be at variance with the dictates of inspiration, their agreement with which may be immediately obvious; but purely because they deviate from the trains of thought which the hearer is accustomed to pursue with complacency. It is purely an affair of taste, it is neither the opposition of reason, or of conscience, which is concerned, but the mere operation of antipathy.

The paucity of practical instruction, the practice of dwelling almost exclusively in the exercise of the ministry on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of the precepts of Christ, and the duties of morality, is abundantly sufficient, without the slightest admixture of error, to produce the effect of which we are speaking; nor is it to be doubted that even holy and exemplary men have by these means paved the way for Antinomianism. When they have found it necessary to advert to points of morality, and to urge them on scriptural motives, the difference between these, and their usual strain of instruction, has produced a sort of mental revulsion. Conscious, meanwhile, that they have taught nothing but the pure and uncorrupted word of God, have inculcated no doctrine but what appears to be sustained by the fair interpretation of that word, they are astonished at perceiving the eager impetuosity with which a part of their hearers rush into Antinomian excesses; when a thorough investigation might convince them, that though they have inculcated truth, it has not been altogether "as it is in Jesus;" that many awakening and alarming considerations familiar to the Scriptures have been neglected, much of their pungent and practical appeal to the conscience suppressed, and a profusion of cordials and stimulants administered, where cathartics were required.

In the New Testament the absolute subserviency of doctrinal statements to the formation of the principles and habits of practical piety is never lost sight of; we are continually reminded that obedience is the end of all knowledge, and of all religious impressions. But the tendency, it is to be feared, of much popular and orthodox instruction, is to bestow on the belief of certain doctrines, combined with strong religious emotion, the importance of an ultimate object, to the neglect of that great principle, that "circum-

cision is nothing, and uncircumcision nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." While it is but candid to suppose that some are beguiled through the "good words and fair speeches," by which the apostles of Antinomianism recommend themselves to the unlearned and unstable, it can scarce be doubted that they are chiefly indebted for their success to the aversion which many feel to Christianity as a *practical* system. Divest it of its precepts and its sanctions, represent it as a mere charter of privileges, a provision for investing a certain class with a title to eternal life, independent of every moral discrimination, and it will be eagerly embraced; but it will not be the religion of the New Testament; it will not be the religion of him who closed his sermon on the Mount by reminding his hearers, that he who "heareth his sayings and doeth them not, shall be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand; and the storm came, and the rains descended, and the winds blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was founded upon the sand."

The most effectual antidote to the leaven of Antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel, in an accurate delineation of the Christian temper, in a specific and minute exposition of the personal, social and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming motives which Revelation abundantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel under the pretence of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. If the first involves the folly of attempting to rear a structure without a foundation, the latter leaves it naked and useless.

A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alternative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed, without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief, it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for re-establishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature. Though there must unquestionably be a perfect agreement betwixt all revealed truths, because truth is ever consistent with itself, yet they are not all adapted to produce the same immediate impression. They contribute to the same ultimate object, "the perfecting the man of God," by opposite tendencies; and while some are immediately adapted to inspire confidence and joy, others are fitted to produce vigilance and fear; like different species of diet, which may in their turn be equally conducive to

health, though their action on the system be dissimilar. Hence it is of great importance, not merely that the doctrine that is taught be sound and scriptural, but that the proportion maintained betwixt the various articles of religious instruction coincide, as far as possible, with the inspired model; that each doctrine occupy its proper place in the scale; that the whole counsel of God be unfolded, and no one part of revealed truth be presented with a frequency and prominence which shall cast the others into shade. The progress of Antinomianism, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be ascribed in a great measure to the neglect of these precautions, to an intemperate and almost exclusive inculcation of doctrinal points.

Even when the necessity of an exemplary conduct is enforced upon Christians, an attentive and intelligent hearer will frequently perceive a manifest difference between the motives by which it is urged, and those which are presented by the inspired writers. The latter are not afraid of reminding every description of professors without exception, that "if they live after the flesh they shall die," and that they will then only "be partakers of Christ, if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and rejoicing of their hope firm unto the end;" while too many content themselves with insisting on considerations, which, whatever weight they may possess on a devout and tender spirit, it is the first effect of sinful indulgence to impair. Of this nature is the menace of spiritual desertion, darkness, absence of religious consolation, and other spiritual evils, which will always be found to be less alarming, just in proportion to the degree of religious declension. To combat the moral distempers to which the professors of religion are liable by such antidotes as these, is appealing to a certain refinement of feeling which the disease has extinguished or diminished, instead of alarming them with the prospect of death. It is not by sentimental addresses, nor by an appeal to the delicacies and sensibilities of a soul diseased, that the Apostles proposed to alarm the fears, or revive the vigilance of disorderly walkers; they drew aside the veil of eternity; they presented the thought, in all its terror, of the coming of Christ "as a thief in the night." I would not be understood to insinuate that the more refined topics of appeal may not occasionally be resorted to with great propriety; all I would be supposed to regret is the exclusive employment of a class of considerations, of one order of motives, derived from religious sensibility, to the neglect of those which are founded on eternal prospects and interests. As it is seldom safe for an accountable creature to lose sight of these in his most elevated moments; so least of all can they be dispensed with, in the season of successful temptation. It is then especially, if I am not

greatly mistaken, whatever may have been our past profession or attainments, that we need to be reminded of the awful certainty of future retribution, to recall to our remembrance that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If in the scheme of doctrine we have embraced, we suspect there is something incompatible with the use of such admonitions, we may be assured, either that the doctrine itself is false, or that our inference from it is erroneous; since no speculative tenets in religion can be so indubitably certain, as the universality of the moral government of God.

Before I close this preface, I must be permitted to add, that the prevailing practice of representing the promises of the gospel as *unconditional*, or at least of carefully avoiding the obvious phraseology which the contrary supposition would suggest, appears to me directly to pave the way to Antinomianism. The idea of *meritorious* conditions is indeed utterly incompatible with the gospel, considered as a system of grace. But if there be no conditions of salvation whatever, how it is possible to confute the pretensions, or confound the confidence of the most licentious professor, I am at an utter loss to discover. It will be in vain to allege the entire absence of internal holiness, together with all the fruits of the Spirit, as defeating his hope of eternal life, since upon the supposition we are combating, the answer is ready, that the enjoyment of future felicity is suspended on no conditions. The absurdity of this notion is not less palpable than its presumption. All promises must either be made to individuals by name, or indefinitely to persons of a specific character. A moment's attention will be sufficient to satisfy us that the promise of pardon in the New Testament is of the latter description; in no one instance is it addressed to the individual by name, but to the penitent, the believing, the obedient, or to some similar specification of character. Before any person therefore can justly appropriate the promise to himself, he must ascertain his possession of that character, or, which is precisely the same thing, he must perceive that he comes within the prescribed condition. When it is affirmed, that, except we repent, we shall perish, is it not manifest that he only is entitled to claim exemption from that doom, who is conscious of the feelings of a penitent? For the same reason, if he only who believes shall be saved, our assurance of salvation, as far as it depends upon evidence, must be exactly proportioned to the certainty we feel of our actual believing. To abandon these principles, is to involve ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth, to lie open to the greatest delusions, to build conclusions of infinite moment on phantoms light as air. He who flatters himself with the hope of salvation, without perceiving in himself a specific difference of character from "the world that lieth in wickedness," either founds

his persuasion absolutely on nothing, or on an immediate revelation, on a preternatural discovery of a matter of fact, on which the Scriptures are totally silent. This absurd notion of unconditional promises, by severing the assurance of salvation from all the fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness.

As far as it is sustained by the least shadow of reasoning, it may be traced to the practice of confounding the secret purposes of the Supreme Being with his revealed promises. That in the breast of the Deity an eternal purpose has been formed respecting the salvation of a certain portion of the human race, is a doctrine, which, it appears to me, is clearly revealed. But this secret purpose is so far from being incompatible with the necessary conditions of salvation, that they form a part of it; their existence is an inseparable link in the execution of the divine decree; for the same wisdom which has appointed the end, has also infallibly determined the means by which it shall be accomplished; and as the personal direction of the decree remains a secret, until it is developed in the event, it cannot possibly, considered in itself, lay a foundation for confidence. That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life, may be inferred with much probability from many passages of Scripture; but if any person infers from these general premises, that he is of that number, he advances a proposition without the slightest color of evidence. An assurance of salvation can consequently, in no instance, be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects, that is, in that renewal of the heart which the Bible affirms to be essential to future felicity. But I am detaining the reader too long from the pleasure and the advantage he may promise himself from the perusal of the following treatise, where he will meet with no illiberal insinuations, no personal invective, the too frequent seasoning of controversy, and the ordinary gratification of vulgar minds; but a series of calm and dispassionate reasonings out of the Scriptures. That they may produce all the beneficial results which the excellent author has so much at heart, is the fervent prayer of the writer of these lines.

Leicester, July 2, 1819.

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION OF

"HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS:"

By ROBERT HALL,

LATE OF ARNSBY.

PREFACE.

An aversion to religious controversy may arise from two causes, in their nature the most opposite; a contempt of religion itself, or a high degree of devotional feeling. They who consider the objects of religion as visionary and uncertain, or who, rejecting Revelation, feel their inability to find a place where they may fix their footing, will naturally feel an emotion of contempt for theological contests, similar to that which we should experience towards men who were fighting for possessions in the air.

There are not a few who would engage with the utmost seriousness and ardor in a dispute on the nature and effects of paper currency, who would be ashamed of being suspected of directing their attention for a moment to the most weighty questions in theology. Attentive to all the aspects and combinations of the material and of the political world, they are accustomed to regard religion as a sort of Utopia, a land of shadow and of fiction, where, rapt in pleasing vision, Credulity reposes on the lap of Imposture. This sort of persons are so completely overcome by the enchantments of the present state, so entirely devoted to the wisdom which St. James denominates earthly and sensual, that they are incapable of being impressed with a conviction of the possibility of a higher order of objects, or a more elevated and refined condition of being, than that with which they are conversant; and though they may possess a subtile and penetrating genius, they are not less disqualified for religious inquiries than an idiot or an infant. *They mind earthly things.*

How far the indisposition to religious controversy, which prevails at present, may be justly ascribed to this Sadducean temper, I shall not pretend to determine. It is certain, however, that in some this indisposition proceeds from a better cause. While the former class of persons think religion not worth disputing about, there are others who conceive it to be a subject too sacred for dispute. They wish to confine it to silent meditation, to sweeten solitude, to inspire devotion, to guide the practice, and purify the

heart, and never to appear in public but in the character of the authentic interpreter of the will of Heaven. They conceive it degraded whenever it is brought forward to combat on the arena. We are fully convinced, that a disputatious humor is unfavorable to piety; and that controversies in religion have often been unnecessarily multiplied and extended; but how they can be dispensed with altogether, we are at a loss to discover, until some other method is discovered of confuting error, than sound and solid argument. As we no longer live in times (God be thanked!) when coercion can be employed, or when any individual, or any body of men, are invested with that authority which could silence disputes by an oracular decision, there appears no possibility of maintaining the interests of truth, without having recourse to temperate and candid controversy. Perhaps the sober use of this weapon may not be without its advantages, even at the present season. Prone as we are to extremes, may there not be some reason to apprehend, we have passed from that propensity to magnify every difference subsisting among Christians, to a neglect of just discrimination, to a habit of contemplating the Christian system as one in which there is little or nothing remaining to be explored? Let us cultivate the most cordial esteem for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let us anxiously guard against that asperity and contempt which have too often mingled with theological debates; but let us aim, at the same time, to acquire and retain the most accurate conceptions of religious truth. Every improvement in the knowledge of Christ and the mysteries of his gospel, will abundantly compensate for the labor and attention necessary to its attainment.

However unhappily controversies have too often been conducted, the assistance they have afforded in the discovery of truth, is not light or inconsiderable. Not to mention the Reformation, which was principally effected by controversy, how many truths have by this means been set in a clearer view; and, while the unhappy passions it has awakened have subsided, the light struck out in the collision has been retained and perpetuated.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent, but in the order of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage, and to the most effect, in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist, warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the invention of arguments, tries every weapon, and explores the hidden recesses of a subject with an intense vigilance and an ardor, which it is next to impossible, in a calmer state of mind, to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritative matter intro-

duced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgement of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils occasioned by controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

These observations I beg leave to submit to the reader, as an apology for the republication of a treatise which is confessedly controversial. Coinciding with the venerable author in the general aim and drift of the following sheets, I am far from pledging myself to the approbation and support of every position contained in them; nor would I be understood to attach all the importance to some of the points in discussion, which they appear in his estimation to have possessed.

If there be any impression, in the following treatise, which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the Calvinists and Arminians are of the nature of *fundamentals*, (of which, however, I am not aware,) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among Christians.

Having no pecuniary interest in this work, I may, perhaps, be allowed with the more freedom to communicate my opinion of its merit. I am much mistaken, if the candid reader will not perceive in the author an impartial love of truth, together with a degree of ingenuity and acuteness in its illustration and defence, not always to be met with in theological discussions.

The sentiments of my honored father were decidedly Calvinistic. His object, however, in the following treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence, and impairing its beauty. On reviewing his religious tenets during the latter years of his life, and impartially comparing them with the Scriptures, he was led to discard some opinions which he had formerly embraced, and which he afterwards came to consider as having a penicious tendency.

From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter, those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance; and under the former, those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to

frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only on the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel, those being spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.

These conclusions were evidently founded upon two assumptions; first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the duties to which it extends. In opposition to this, the author of the following treatise has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that the inability, under which the unconverted labor, is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature; that it is in itself criminal; and that, so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be duty, it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

In considering the moral character of an action, we are naturally led to inquire into its motive, and according as that is criminal, laudable, or indifferent, to characterize the action whence it proceeds. The motive, however, appears no otherwise entitled to commendation, than as it indicates the disposition of the agent; so that in analyzing the elements of moral character, we can ascend no higher than to the consideration of the disposition, or the state of the will and of the affections, as constituting the essence of that portion of virtue or of vice which we respectively ascribe to it. To proceed farther will only involve us in a circle, since, to whatever we might trace the disposition in question, should we be induced, for example, to ascribe it to the free exercise of the will, that exercise would fall under the same predicament, and be considered either as virtuous or vicious, according to the disposition whence it proceeds. When the Scriptures have placed the inability of mankind to yield holy and acceptable obedience in an evil disposition, or in blindness and hardness of heart, they have conducted us to the ultimate point on this subject, and have established the doctrine of human criminality upon a basis which cannot be shaken or disturbed, without confounding the first principles of moral discrimination. Though it is manifest this impotence is entirely of a moral nature, totally distinct from the want of natural faculties, it is equally evident, that, to whatever extent it exists, while it actually subsists, it is as effectual an impediment to the performance of holy actions as any physical privation whatev-

er; and on that account, and that alone, may, without absurdity, be styled an *inability*. This important distinction was not altogether unknown to our earlier divines, though they neglected to avail themselves of it as fully as they ought. It is clearly stated by the great Mr. Howe, in his 'Blessedness of the Righteous,' as well as adverted to by Mr. Baxter in several of his practical works. But the earliest regular treatise on this subject it has been my lot to meet with, was the production of Mr. Truman, an eminent nonconformist divine. In his dissertation on moral impotence, as he styles it, he has anticipated the most important arguments of succeeding writers, and has evinced throughout a most masterly acquaintance with his subject. This work is mentioned in terms of high respect by Nelson, in his Life of Bishop Bull, who remarks, that his thoughts were original, and that he had hit upon a method of defending Calvinism against the objections of Bull and of others, peculiar to himself. His claim to perfect originality, however, was not so well founded as Nelson supposed. Since his time the subject has been fully discussed by the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, in his treatise on the Will, and the distinction defended with all the depth and precision peculiar to that amazing genius.

Another principle assumed as a basis by the high Calvinists, is, that the same things cannot be the duty of man, and the gift of God; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise can on no occasion be the matter of obligation. The Scriptures frequently affirm faith and repentance to be the gift of God; hence it is concluded that they cannot be obligatory on the unregenerate; a conclusion diametrically opposed to innumerable passages in the Old and New Testament, which insist, in the most peremptory style, on true conversion and a lively faith, as the most essential duties, which other passages are equally express in exhibiting as matter of promise. "A new heart will I give them," says the Lord by Ezekiel, "and a new spirit will I put within them, and I will take away the heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh." The prophet cries, "Make yourselves a new heart, for why will ye die, ye house of Israel?" In exact accordance with the language of St. James, "Wash your hearts, ye sinners, and cleanse your hearts, ye double-minded." The burden of our Saviour's ministry, as well as that of his forerunner, was "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand;" while St. Peter, who perfectly knew the genius of Christianity, affirms that Christ is "exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins." "Circumcise your hearts," said Moses, "and be no longer stiff-necked;" the same Moses had been previously commissioned to declare, "The Lord thy God shall circumcise thine heart and the heart

of thy seed." Now the circumcision of the heart we are taught by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, to regard as the distinguishing feature of the truly regenerate—"of him who is a Jew inwardly, whose praise is not of man, but of God." Whoever impartially weighs the import of these scriptures, must be convinced that the same things are, in *fact*, matter of command and the subject of promise, and must consequently be prepared to acquiesce in the decision of infinite wisdom on this subject, however much he may be at a loss to explain or account for it. The consistency of the promises and of the commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command, and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of voluntary powers; we shall also perceive that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from their obligation, nor tends in the least degree to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true; but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend in their own nature to incline the will, and therefore they cannot be withheld, without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion. This may suffice to evince the propriety of issuing commands, notwithstanding the known and radical indisposition to comply; or, which comes to the same thing, whatever be the *state of the will*. With respect to the other side of the supposed contradiction, what can be plainer than that the will, as well as every other faculty of the mind, is under divine control, and that God can with infinite ease, in what instances, and in what manner he please, so change and modify it, as to induce a prompt and cheerful compliance with his requisition? What should prevent Him, at whose disposal are the hearts of the mightiest of men, "to make his people willing in the day of his power?"

It is instructive, as well as amusing, to trace the coincidence which is often found betwixt systems which appear, at first view, at the utmost variance from each other. The grosser Arminians and Pelagians contend, that it is the duty of all men to repent and believe, because all possess an inherent power of so doing, without special or supernatural assistance. The high Calvinists, on the contrary, deny that any man in a state of unregeneracy is under an obligation to perform those duties, because they are *not* possessed of the requisite ability. Thus both concur in making mor-

al ability the measure of obligation; a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conducts us to this very extraordinary conclusion, that men are obliged to just as much of duty as they are inclined to. On these, and other points connected with them, the reader, if we are not mistaken, will find much solid instruction in the following treatise, accompanied with such a constant attention to the great end of theological discussion, the promotion of practical piety, as can scarcely fail of affording high satisfaction to serious minds. To this treatise, and to another on a similar subject, by my excellent and judicious friend Mr. Fuller, the Dissenters in general, and the Baptists in particular, are under great obligations, for emancipating them from the fetters of prejudice, and giving free scope to the publication of the gospel. By these means a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination to which I have the honor to belong; the excrescences of Calvinism have been cut off; the points of defence have been diminished in number, and better fortified; truth has shone forth with brighter lustre, and the ministry of the gospel been rendered more simple, more practical, and more efficacious.

In reply to such as may object to the metaphysical subtlety which pervades some parts of the following treatise, I would avail myself of the distinction admirably illustrated by the author of the 'Light of Nature pursued.'* He observes, that although metaphysical reasoning rarely, if ever, conduces to the discovery of truth, it is of great advantage in the detection of sophistry; and that the mist and confusion in which moral subjects have been involved, by crude and undigested metaphysics, can only be exploded by the temperate use of that which is true and genuine; so that the chief praise of metaphysics is the cure of its own ills, the repair of the mischief which itself has wrought. The reader will observe, that the author employs metaphysics, not to rear the fabric of truth, which can only be effected by a profound deference to inspiration, but to demolish a rotten superstition which conceals its beauty. For the want of elegance or polish, discernible in the following sheets, it will be sufficient apology to inform the reader, that the author, destitute of the advantages of early education, had no other resources to depend upon, in his religious inquiries, than what were derived from the vigor of his understanding, and his unbiassed integrity of heart. Had he enjoyed the benefit of literary culture, he would have undoubtedly written in a style and manner more adapted to gain the attention of the superior classes; whether his reasoning would have been more

* Abraham Tucker.

cogent, or his method of handling his subject better fitted for the instruction of plain, serious Christians, for whose benefit he principally labored, is more questionable.

Gratitude and veneration compel me to add, that, with all the imperfections of the work, and the disadvantages under which the author of it labored, I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favors an indulgent Providence has conferred upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom in all the essential features of character it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be

—— Haud passibus æquis.

A BRIEF VIEW

OF THE

EXCELLENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION;

BEING A

CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

OF THE

WESTERN ASSOCIATION, 1787.

A BRIEF VIEW.

1. The dignity of the dispensation under which we live is not the institution of man, but the wise and gracious plan of God to make us happy. With this view he raised up the people of the Jews, kept them distinct from all others, and gave them such a portion of knowledge as might, in due time, prepare for the display of the Gospel. With this view, a succession of priests was kept up, the eye of prophecy was enlightened, and the hand of Omnipotence stretched forth. After thus preparing the way, our great Redeemer himself appeared upon the earth, lived in humiliation and sorrow, and died in agony and disgrace. During the time of his personal ministry, he had every attestation of Deity in his favor, and the power of God was often exerted in a most signal manner. After his ascension, a larger measure of knowledge and power was given to his disciples than had been afforded them before. They asserted his character, and affirmed that he had risen from the dead, in the very place in which he had been crucified. They were endued with a miraculous skill in tongues, for the very purpose of spreading the gospel through the different parts of the world; and with what success they did it, and how in the face of danger and death they maintained their cause, whilst many of them perished in their sufferings, is well known, and will draw tears of admiration and gratitude from all succeeding ages. When we see the Saviour descending from heaven as a witness for God, and behold his sufferings and death, we cannot help being astonished at so stupendous a scene, and inquiring into the purpose it was intended to accomplish. One, among many great ends to be answered by it, is, removing the ignorance and error in which we are by nature involved, and giving us the knowledge of God and our true happiness. If there be a moral governor of the world, it must be of great importance to know upon what terms we stand with him, and what expectations we may form from him. A sober, reflecting man could scarcely feel himself at ease, till he attained to some certainty in points of so much consequence; and yet how little information we can derive from reason, in inquiries

of this nature, may be seen from the experience of past ages, and those the most enlightened and refined; who, after all their researches, have not been able to come to any agreement, or to gain any satisfaction. We may discover, by the light of nature, the existence of a Being who is possessed of all possible perfection. The works of God sufficiently display his goodness, wisdom, and power; but with respect to the application of these in any particular instance, it leaves us entirely at a loss. We have no measure which we can apply to the operations of an Infinite Mind; and therefore, though we may be assured that the Divine Being possesses all the attributes which compose supreme excellence, it is impossible for us to say in particular instances, what path of conduct may best consist with those perfections in their most extensive operation. Indeed, to discover not only the leading attributes of the Divine Nature, but to be acquainted beforehand with every direction they will take, would be fully to comprehend the Most High. When therefore, without the aid of Revelation, we attempt to foretel the dispensations of the Almighty, we are lost in a maze, and are obliged to rest in vague and uncertain conjectures. This holds true more especially when applied to the conduct of Providence with respect to only a small part of creation. In this case our uncertainty is doubled, since we know that all the works of God form one vast system, and the regulation of the parts must be subservient to the administration of the whole. But this situation is ours. Confined to a point in our existence, and limited in our ideas, we cannot tell what relation we bear to other beings, or how it may seem fit to Divine Providence to dispose of us in relation to those higher and more ultimate designs which are continually carrying on. Our meaning may be illustrated by the following instance. It is certain that the Divine Being is in the greatest degree compassionate and good; but if a number of creatures render themselves unhappy by a wilful rebellion against him, a singular instance would arise. It would be impossible to say whether the exercise of compassion *here* would best comport with the highest goodness, and the greatest happiness, in the general administration of Providence; because no one could trace every relation which the part bears to the whole.

This, you will perceive is a case entirely to the point; for disorder and sin *have* entered into the world. It is evident that things are turned out of their natural and original channel, that they are not what they *have* been, nor what they *ought* to be. "Men have corrupted their way." A change so singular in the creation, a situation so striking, and so little to be apprehended under the government of a holy and perfect Being, naturally leads us to look for a revolution in the dispensations of Providence. In

such a state, some new and awful interposition of the divine hand might well be expected. There is something, at the same time, in the idea of having provoked the displeasure of God, when seriously thought of, too heavy for the heart of man to bear. We cannot leave his presence, we cannot resist his power, we cannot evade his stroke. Hence mankind in all ages have had their fears awakened, and have taken a gloomy survey of an hereafter. They saw death busy around them, carrying their fellow-creatures out of their sight. Anxious and fearful for themselves, they sought for *them* in the dreams of poetic illusion, and followed them in the gloomy visions of unenlightened fancy. They found that life was filled with vanity and sorrow; they knew not but death would extinguish their existence, or transmit them to still greater misery. They had just light enough dimly to shew them the Judge of the universe seated on his throne, in wrath, clouded with darkness, and beset with judgements. They had no certain access to him, no acceptable worship to pay him, no assurance that their prayers would be answered, or their sins forgiven them. They saw not the issue of things, nor could they take any lengthened view of futurity. They knew not, therefore, how to cherish any great hopes, to form any high and extensive plans; they were confined to the present moment, and all beyond it was covered with confusion and horror. The first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans sufficiently illustrates the truth of these remarks.

Herein then appears the supreme excellence of the Christian dispensation. In the midst of this darkness it rises like the sun in its strength, and all these gloomy shades melt away, and are lost in the brightness of it. It no longer leaves us to the conjectures of reason, which has always erred, nor to the fluctuating opinions of men; but all it declares it confirms by the authority of God. The truths it discovers were proclaimed by the Son of God himself, who lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity; who was acquainted with all his counsels, and created all his works. It raises no hopes within, but what are built upon the promises and oath of Him who cannot lie. In the mystery of Christ's incarnation, who was God as well as man; in the humiliation of his life, and in his death upon the cross, we behold the most stupendous instance of compassion; whilst at the same moment the law of God received more honor than it could have done by the obedience and death of any or of all his creatures. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." In this dispensation of his grace, he has reached so far beyond our highest hopes, that if we love him, we may be assured that he will with it freely give us all things. Access to God is now open at all times, and from all places; and to such as sincerely ask it,

he has promised his Spirit, to teach them to pray, and to help their infirmities. The sacrifice of Christ has rendered it *just* for him to forgive sins; and whenever we are led to repent of and forsake it, even the *righteousness* of God is declared in the pardon of it. Whilst we contemplate the gospel, consolation pours itself in on every side, and refreshes our inmost souls. It gives us the prospect of our sins being pardoned, our prayers accepted, our very afflictions turned into blessings, and our existence prolonged to an endless duration. We see Christianity as yet but in its infancy. It has not already reached the great ends it is intended to answer, and to which it is constantly advancing. At present it is but as a grain of mustard seed, and seems to bring forth a tender and weakly crop; but be assured it is of God's own right hand's planting, and he will never suffer it to perish. It will soon stretch its branches to the view, and its shade to the ends of the earth. The weary will repose themselves under it, the hungry will partake of its fruits, and "its leaves will be for the healing of the nations."

Those who profess the name of Jesus will delight in contemplating the increase and grandeur of his kingdom, and their expectations will not deceive them. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." The religion of Jesus is not the religion of one age or of one nation. It is a train of light first put in motion by God, and which will continue to move and to spread, till it has filled the whole earth with its glory. Its blessings will descend, and its influence will be felt to the latest generations. Uninterrupted in its course and boundless in its extent, it will not be limited by time or space. The earth is too narrow for the display of its effects and the accomplishment of its purposes. It points forward to an eternity. The great Redeemer will again appear upon the earth, as the Judge and Ruler of it; will "send forth his angels, and gather his elect from the four winds;" will abolish sin and death; will place the righteous forever in the presence of his God and their God, of his Father and their Father.

II. If our religion be such as we have attempted briefly to describe, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" We are conscious that a mere general belief of the Christian Revelation will not purify the heart, nor regulate the conduct. We may calmly assent to the most interesting and solemn truths of Christianity, and afterwards suffer them to slide out of our minds, without leaving any impression behind them. If we look back upon the usual course of our feelings, we shall find that we are more influenced by the frequent recurrence of objects, than by their weight and importance; and that habit

has more force in forming our characters, than our opinions have. The mind naturally takes its tone and complexion from what it habitually contemplates. Hence it is, that the world, by constantly pressing upon our senses, and being ever open to our view, takes so wide a sway in the heart. How then must we correct this influence, and by faith overcome the world, unless we habitually turn our attention to religion and eternity? Let us make them familiar with our minds, and mingle them with the ordinary stream of our thoughts; retiring often from the world, and conversing with God and our own souls. In these solemn moments, nature, and the shifting scenes of it, will retire from our view, and we shall feel ourselves left alone with God. We shall walk as in his sight; we shall stand, as it were, at his tribunal. Illusions will then vanish apace, and every thing will appear in its true proportion and proper color. We shall estimate human life, and the worth of it, not by fleeting and momentary sensations, but by the light of serious reflection and steady faith. We shall see little in the past to please, or in the future to flatter. Its feverish dreams will subside, and its enchantments be dissolved. It is much, however, if faith do not upon such occasions draw aside the veil which rests upon futurity, and cut short the interval of expectation. How often has she borne aloft the spirits of good men, and given them a vision of better days and brighter hopes! They have already entered the rest that remained for them; they have "come to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to God the Judge of all." From these seasons of retirement and religious meditation, we shall return to the active scenes of life with greater advantage. From the presence of God we shall come forth with our passions more composed, our thoughts better regulated, and our hearts more steady and pure. Let us not imagine that the benefit of such exercises is confined to the moments which are spent in them; for as the air retains the smell, and is filled with the fragrance of leaves which have been long shed; so will these meditations leave a sweet and refreshing influence behind them.

If our religion be genuine, it will be a source of the warmest and most interesting feelings. It will be a spring of consolation within, which will often be full and pour itself forth. If the Gospel have not taken a share in the feelings of our hearts, if it have not moved the great springs of our hopes and fears, we may be assured that we have never experienced its force. It is filled with such views as cannot fail to interest and transport us. Besides, if we do not feel the Gospel, as well as believe it, how can it support against the overwhelming influence of what we *do* feel? The world steals upon us, and engages our affections on all sides. Its

prospects enrapture, and its pleasures are seducing us. Will a religion which rests only on opinion, and a conviction at times extorted from us, keep us firm against these assaults, and stem the force of a torrent which never ceases to flow? This can be done only by opposing hope to hope, feeling to feeling, pleasure to pleasure.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons why Christianity does no more purify our hearts, is, that we are apt to confine it to seasons of worship, and to shut it out from the ordinary concerns of life. It is a great and fatal mistake to imagine them so separate, that we can innocently and usefully engage in the one, without any regard had to the other. Our temporal affairs should never be suffered to mingle with the exercises of religion, but religion should always regulate the conduct of our temporal affairs. And the reason of this is obvious. The world and the fashion of it is passing away, and our union with it will soon be dissolved; whilst the relation we bear to God and eternity is ever the same, and extends to all times and to all places. The character, which, as Christians, we sustain, is our highest character; and the hopes, which, as such, we indulge, are our highest hopes. It is but reasonable, it is but just, therefore, that the desire of discharging the one, and attaining the other, should sway the *whole* of our conduct. Perhaps we shall be ready to think that this advice is impracticable. You will urge the necessity of attending to your worldly callings, which, you will say, cannot be carried on, unless you give them the greater part of your time and attention. Be it so. Remember we do not advise you to spend more of your *time* in religion than in your ordinary concerns. This would extinguish all human industry. But if we be sincere in our profession of religion, we shall regulate our pursuits by it, and engage no farther in any of them than is consistent with the spirit of it. In the midst of all our other concerns, we shall still make religion the centre of our hopes, and the consummation of our wishes. An ordinary mechanic devotes more of his time to the labor of his hands, than to any other concern; but it is not his laborious employment that interests his heart; it is his desire of procuring subsistence, and of warding off the inconveniences of want.

Finally, let each of us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith or not; let us prove our own selves; let us not shrink from the severest test to which conscience and the word of God can put us. If we be indeed found sincere, after thus searching our hearts, our faith will grow more firm, and our consolations more steady. Or if it appear that we have been hitherto deceiving and being deceived, (awful idea!) we shall at least have an opportunity of once more lifting up our eyes for mercy, and of reading our dan-

ger in our sin, not in our punishment. But we hope better things, and things which accompany salvation. Having fled from the wrath to come, and laid hold on eternal life, we rejoice in the prospect of meeting together at the great day, when we shall have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Then, brought out of much tribulation, and redeemed from every nation, and tongue, and people, his elect shall be gathered, he shall give up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. Alas! the voice of individual praise is weak and feeble; but how will our hearts swell with adoration and delight, when, while we are praising Him, He shall receive, from millions of beings, and millions of worlds, the same incense!

A

LETTER

TO THE

REV. CHARLES SIMEON, A.M.

VICAR AND LECTURER OF TRINITY CHURCH, AND FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE,

CAMBRIDGE.

1795.

LETTER.

CAMBRIDGE, AUG. 7, 1795.

REVEREND SIR,

ALTERCATION is at all times unpleasant, especially when occasions of disagreement arise between ministers of the Gospel of peace, who reside in the same place. On this account, no motive less powerful than self-defence and the desire of vindicating aspersed innocence, could impel me to address you in this public manner, on the very extraordinary sermon you delivered last Sunday afternoon, at your parish church. Not having the satisfaction of hearing you, I am obliged to depend for my information of its contents, on report; and I hope if I am so unfortunate as to mistake or misrepresent your sentiments, you will be so kind as to set me right. Your text, I understand, was Matt. 7: 15, 20: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," &c. Your sermon, I find, was directed to a display of the arts of religious seduction, with a view to prepare and fortify your hearers against the designs of bad men, who, under the cloak of religion, might endeavor to corrupt their innocence and pervert their simplicity. You levelled these precautions particularly against the DISSENTERS; complained of the artful methods they took to draw men off from the Church; and that the BAPTISTS in particular would never be satisfied till they got your people under the water. You read, you remember, the following extract from Matthew Henry's comment on the text, as applicable to the false prophets you had in view, observing it would have the greater weight, as coming from a Dissenter. "If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrine *these prophets preach*, have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversation, unjust or uncharitable, *factious or disturbers of the public peace;* if it indulge carnal liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we

may conclude that this persuasion cometh not of him who called them."

I have a right, Sir, to demand—who these ministers are, whose preaching tends to make their hearers "proud and contentious, factious or disturbers of the public peace?" You cannot mean to guard your parishioners against preachers at a distance; precaution is useless where there is no danger. You unquestionably had in view some minister or ministers upon the spot. Permit me to ask, who they are, and upon what authority you presume to charge their doctrine with being inimical to piety, and subversive of order and *good* government? Have you ever yourself heard them utter any such doctrine? Or, if you collect your ideas from hearsay, on whose report do you rely? You are unquestionably not so little instructed in the principles of morality, as to be ignorant that calumny is a vice; and that under every character by which you can wish to be respected, as a minister, as a Christian, and as a man of honor, you are called upon, either to establish the truth of your positions, or to confess their falsehood.

You have thought fit to caution your people against being seduced from their attachment to the Church, by the supposed insinuations and artifices of the Dissenters. What insinuations and what artifices have *we* ever practised! Our dissent from the Established Church is public, tolerated by the laws, and its reasons are open to the discussion of the whole world. Name, if you can, a single instance, in which the Dissenters at Cambridge have attempted to make proselytes by any private and clandestine methods, by any other means than the open avowal of their sentiments. I believe you will not be disposed to make the same demand on *your* part, or if you should, *I am prepared to give you a fuller answer than you wish.*

As you passed from a *general* attack upon Dissenters, to specify the Baptists in particular, and to put your hearers on their guard against their arts of proselytism; I call upon you, in the character of a Baptist, to explain your insinuations. Produce, if you would not stand convicted as a public calumniator, *one* specimen of that unfair and ungenerous method of making converts, which you have attributed to us.

Our sentiments on the baptismal rite, exempt us from any temptation to lay an undue stress upon it. We consider it merely as the *symbol* of a Christian profession, while you profess to believe it *regenerates* the partaker, and makes him a child of God. It would be cruel and inhuman in you, *not* to enforce with eagerness the observation of a rite, which can confer such exalted privileges at so cheap a rate. You ought to remember, too, that *our* mode of administering baptism, by immersion, is conformable to the laws

of your own church, which appoints the candidate to be dipped, except in cases of weakness and disease.

The prominent feature in the description of those false prophets whom you undertook to expose, was, that they preached a doctrine which had a manifest tendency to make people *factious, or disturbers of the public peace.* Now, if it should appear that the dissenting ministers in this town do not *touch* upon politics in their religious services, in any shape, their doctrine cannot be *factious, or have any tendency to make men disturbers of the public* peace. For myself, all who have ever heard me are witnesses, that I never introduced a political subject into the pulpit on any occasion; nor have I any doubt the other dissenting ministers in this town can make the same declaration with equal sincerity. But had our conduct been ever so remote from this moderation and reserve, modesty should unquestionably have restrained *you* from becoming our accuser; when it is well known you are the chief, perhaps the only political preacher in the place; and that you often entertain your hearers with more politics in one sermon, than most dissenting ministers have done during their whole lives.

The doctrines of passive obedience and non resistance, which in better times SACHEVEREL was disgraced for preaching, are familiar in your mouth; the transient successes of the war were in my hearing the subject of your triumphant boast; the exiled clergy of France you acknowledged to be your Christian brethren; and, to soften the harsh features of Popery, you compared the difference of sentiment between its adherents and yourself, to that which subsisted between the Gentile churches and the Jewish church at Jerusalem. On the same occasion you assured us with infinite exultation, and with a degree of foresight, which shews that if we are *false prophets*, you are not a *true one*, you *anticipated* the speedy return of the emigrant clergy. In admirable consistence with your character as a Protestant minister, you dwelt with rapture on the prospect of seeing the walls of mystic Babylon rebuilt, and the ancient apostolic church at Rome restored with fresh splendor.

It is not politics then, it is evident, to which you entertain an aversion. Pardon me, Sir, if, when I hear of your ascetic pretensions to political indifference, I suspect a little disingenuity at the bottom. While you reprobate political discussion, you embrace every opportunity of inflaming political passions; and that you may more securely guide the opinions of your admirers, you are anxious to keep them in the dark.

The fervor of religious zeal and ministerial attachment with you go hand in hand, and any marked dislike to the measures of gov-

ernment is considered as a proof of a religious decline, if not of total reprobation. Did you not lately industriously circulate an inflammatory prayer for success in the present war? Tell me how you could take a more active part in politics, even if you were a hired tool of the ministry?

Since then, instead of being a calm, indifferent spectator, you are thus decided in your *own* political views and conduct; why have not the Dissenters an equal right to form an opinion? May not their attachment to *peace and reform* be as innocent as yours to *war and corruption?* How long is it since the support of the most profligate administration that ever plagued any country; an administration which has filled England with discord, and Europe with blood, and which, in addition to its other delinquencies, is filling up the measure of its iniquities by nearly reducing us to famine, has become the distinguishing criterion of true piety?

Permit me, before I close this address, to admonish you to be upon your guard against a malignant, persecuting spirit, of which you have exhibited numerous indications for some years past. While you explain the general truths of Christianity, and inculcate its general duties, you will ensure the esteem of good men of all denominations, and find ample scope for the exertion of your ministerial talents. In addition to this, you have a right unquestionably to defend the doctrines and discipline of your particular church against the objections of Dissenters; providing you do it, by entering into the *true merits of the question*, without malignant insinuations calculated to blacken the character of your opponents. Your ignorance of the controversy betwixt the Establishment and Dissenters must be extreme, if you suppose general invectives against the disloyalty or irreligion of Dissenters can have any tendency to bring it to an issue. Whether we have lost the purity of our religion, or not, can be known only to that Being who searches the heart; but your violation of the evangelical precepts of charity and candor, makes it evident YOU have not found it.

You will probably be ready to inquire, why I have not addressed you in private on this subject, rather than through this public vehicle; especially since I had yesterday so fair an opportunity, by being accidentally thrown into your company.

My reasons for preferring this mode relate partly to you, and partly to myself. On the one hand, the impressions made to the disadvantage of any body of men by a public accusation can only be effaced by a public reply; on the contrary, if I have misrepresented your meaning, you have a fair opportunity of publicly clearing yourself from the suspicion of calumny.

I have only to add, if the serious perusal of this letter tend in

any degree to correct the virulence of your temper, or restrain the excesses of party zeal, your character will rise in the esteem of an enlightened public, and you will have abundant occasion to rejoice, though fewer bigots should applaud, and fewer fools should admire.

I am, Reverend Sir, your humble servant,

ROBERT HALL.

A

SPEECH

DELIVERED AT

THE GUILDHALL, LEICESTER,

TUESDAY JULY 15, 1817,

AT THE

SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

SPEECH.

It has been usual, on these occasions, to eulogize the Bible Society; I will not say beyond its merits, for they are more than equal to the powers of the most exalted panegyric; but the frequency of these encomiums, must be my apology for saying but little on that topic at present. The stores of rhetoric, appear to me to be exhausted; while every department of nature and of art has been summoned and made to contribute its share to the illustration of the divine simplicity of its principle, the sanctity of its object, and the extent and grandeur of its operations. Never was there an institution, which at once went so far forward in the distribution of its benefits, and exerted such a reflex energy on its members and patrons; producing a generous enthusiasm, which kindles at every step, and is raised to a more intense degree by every fresh achievement.

I consider this Society as a new moral power, which, combining the energies of Christendom in one great effort, promises to change the face of the universe; while, in imitation of Him in whose cause it is enlisted, it travels in the greatness of its strength, "mighty to save." It possesses every characteristic of the work of God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendor and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes, for the most part, by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end, and parsimony in the means. While our pride is mortified by perceiving how little we can effect by the greatest efforts, the Almighty touches a secret spring, known only to himself, and impresses a single motion, which propagates itself in

circles continually extending, till it reaches the extremity of the universe, and diffuses order and happiness through regions most remote from its origin, and most unconscious of its cause.

Of so similar character is the Bible Society, and so analogous to the movements of divine power, that, it appears to me, it would be impious not to acknowledge the agency of the Spirit in its first conception, as much as the superintendence of Providence in its support. To fix upon a course of action, which gives scope to every virtuous energy, while it stands perfectly aloof from the spirit of party; which draws towards itself the best propensities of our common nature, and unites the pious of every nation and profession in one harmonious family, is not the work of a mortal—it bespeaks the finger of God. Its direct benefits are too obvious, to escape the most careless observation; but the indirect influence it exerts, in harmonizing the spirits, and conciliating the affections of such as had long been alienated from each other, is so remarkable, as to make it doubtful, whether its instruments or its objects,—whether those who share, or those who dispense its munificence, are the greatest gainers.

The utility of this admirable institution, however, has been called in question, its constitution censured, and its operations arraigned. To give the Bible to all classes and descriptions, without note or comment, is represented by some as a dangerous experiment, adapted to perplex and mislead uncultivated minds. Excellent as the Scriptures are allowed to be, some preparation, it is asserted, is necessary, ere they a communicated in their full extent; and that the best use that can be immediately made of them, is to compose and distribute such selections and abridgements as seem best calculated for popular instruction.

That some portions of the sacred volume are of more universal interest than others; that the New Testament, for example, has a more immediate relation to our prospects and to our duties, than the Old, is freely conceded; just as one star differs from another star in glory, though they are all placed in the same firmament, and are the work of the same hand. But to this restrictive system, this jealous policy, which would exclude a part of the word of God from universal inspection and perusal, we feel insuperable objections; nor are we disposed to ascribe to any description of men whatever, that control over divine communications, which such a measure implies. We are persuaded that no man possesses a right to curtail the gifts of God, or to deal out with a sparing hand what was intended for universal patrimony. If the manner in which Revelation was imparted, be such as makes it manifest that it was originally designed for the benefit of all, we are at a loss to conceive

how any man can have a right, by his interference, to render it inaccessible.

The question itself, whether it was designed to be communicated to mankind at large, without distinction, or to a particular class, with a discretionary power of communicating it, at such times and in such proportions as they might deem fit, can only be determined by itself. If it bear decisive indications of its being intended for private custody; if it be found to affirm, or even to insinuate, that it is not meant for universal circulation; we must submit to hold it at the discretion of its legitimate guardians, and to accept, with becoming gratitude, such portions as they are pleased to bestow. From the word of God there can be no appeal; it must decide its own character, and determine its own pretensions. Thus much we must be allowed to assume; that if it was originally given to mankind indiscriminately, no power upon earth is entitled to restrict it; because, on the supposition which we are now making, since every man's original right in it was equal, that right can be cancelled by no authority but that which bestowed it. If it was at first promulgated under the character of a universal standard of faith and practice, we are bound to recognize it in that character; and every attempt to alter it, to convert into private what was originally public property, or to make a monopoly of a universal grant, is an act of extreme presumption and impiety. It is to assume a superiority over Revelation itself.

Let us see, then, how the matter stands. Let us ascend to its original, and examine in what shape it was first communicated.

Though we are accustomed to speak of the Bible as *one* book, it is in truth a collection of many, composed at different periods and by different writers, as holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost.

To speak first of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was distributed by the Jews into three parts;—the Pentateuch; the earlier and later Prophets, including some historical compositions; and the Hagiographs, or Holy Writings, consisting chiefly of the Book of Job, the Proverbs, and the Psalms.

With respect to the Pentateuch, it is a matter of notoriety, that it was delivered with the utmost publicity, and was neither more nor less than the public and municipal law of the Jewish commonwealth, which every king, on his ascending the throne, was commanded to copy with his own hand, as the perpetual rule of his government; and every head of a family, to teach and inculcate on his children, when he sat in his house, and when he walked by the way. It was first proclaimed from the top of Mount Sinai, with ineffable splendor, in hearing of the whole nation, prefaced with the remarkable words, "Hear, O Israel." There is

surely no pretence for representing it as a deposit committed to a particular class, when an accurate acquaintance with it was requisite, in order to regulate the private as well as public life of every Israelite. Though, in process of time, its interpretation gave birth to a particular profession, whose followers are styled scribes, in the New Testament, nothing was further from their thoughts than the assumption of a right to withhold it from public perusal; their employment was, partly, by an accurate transcription, to preserve the purity of the copies, and, partly, to elucidate its obscurities.

If we descend to the Prophets, we shall find them addressing their instructions, and announcing their predictions, in the most public manner, to all descriptions of persons—to princes, to nobles, to the populace, in crowded assemblies, in places of the most public resort. Such was the manner in which Jeremiah prophesied :—"I am full," saith he, "of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together." (Jer. 6: 11.) When strong political reasons seemed to dictate a different proceeding, when he was violently importuned by his sovereign to conceal his predictions, lest he should weaken the hands of the people, and encourage their enemies, he remained inflexible, and continued to divulge the suggestions of inspiration, with the same publicity as before. Yet, it is the prophetic part of Scripture which is most obscure, and most liable to be perverted to the purposes of popular delusion.

Of the Hagiographs little need be said. As they consist chiefly of maxims of civil prudence, sentiments of devotion, and sublime descriptions of the Deity and his works, it is probable none will contend for their restricted circulation.

Let us take a rapid glance at the New Testament. Here, the gospels will claim our first attention; and, with respect to these, if we are to credit the earliest ecclesiastical writers, they are a mere abstract of the preaching of the respective Apostles and Evangelists whose names they bear. We are informed that, when they were about to leave certain countries where they had been employed for a considerable time in disseminating the gospel, the inhabitants of those districts were anxious to possess a permanent record of the principal facts in which they had been instructed, that, by reading them at their leisure, they might, in the absence of their teachers, impress them on their memory. The gospels of Mark and Luke are affirmed, by the earliest historians, to have been composed from the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, and not to have been published until they had received the entire approbation of those Apostles. This part of Scripture, then, supplies no pretence or apology for the practice of restricted distribution.

The Epistles next come in order; and these, as is evident from their inscriptions, were addressed to whole assemblies of the faithful; in which, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jew and Gentile, were incorporated on terms of religious equality. They were also read publicly, every Lord's day; in the devotional exercises of which, the recitation of the Scriptures, after the manner of the ancient synagogue, occupied a conspicuous place. We find St. Paul strongly adjuring one of the societies to which he wrote, to take care that his epistle was read to "all the holy brethren."

There is one extraordinary book, of a character totally distinct from the rest, which closes the canon of inspiration. The book to which I refer, you are aware, is the Revelation of St. John;—a composition distinguished above all others, by a profusion of obscure, figurative diction; delineating, by a sort of hieroglyphics, the principal revolutions destined to befall the Christian church, from the earliest times till the consummation of all things. This portion of Scripture is a fertile mine of erroneous, extravagant conjecture, and supplies, by its injudicious interpretation, more gratification to a heated imagination, to a taste for the marvellous and incredible, than the whole of the New Testament beside; insomuch, that few have been found capable of preserving a perfect sobriety and composure in the midst of its stupendous scenery, where the curtain rises and falls so often, where new creations so rapidly succeed each other, accompanied by myriads of the angelic order, and the sound of trumpets, and of voices, and thunderings, and lightnings. Yet it is sufficiently remarkable, that this is the only book, to the perusal of which an express benediction is attached;—"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Its integrity is also guarded and secured by a fearful measure denounced against such as shall presume to alter it in the minutest tittle, by adding to, or taking away from its words. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing what actually ensued, that the peculiar features of this prophecy would excite the prejudices of some, and in others, its obscurity induce neglect, judged it necessary to employ a special precaution against its falling into contempt or oblivion.

Thus it appears, from a rapid induction of particulars, that the Bible is a common property, over which there is no human control; that, as "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," so it is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect," thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.

In addition to what has been said, it is also proper to remark, that translations of the sacred book were early made, for the ben-

efit of the unlearned, in the vernacular language of the countries into which Christianity had spread; that various versions in the Latin were published in the West, and the Syriac in the East, either during the lives of the Apostles, or in the period immediately succeeding; nor was it ever made a question, during the first centuries, whether the inspired writings should be laid open to universal inspection. The Christian Fathers were well known to have inculcated their perusal on all sorts of men; nor are the most celebrated of them, St. Austin and St. Chrysostom, ever more eloquent than when engaged in unfolding their excellence, and expatiating on their utility, to persons of every description.

It was not till "the man of sin" had placed himself in the temple of God, and exalted himself "above all that is called God, and that is worshipped," that a different policy prevailed, and the people were told that they must be content to derive their religious information only through the medium of priests.

Is it possible to conceive a greater insult? If we should resent the attempt to disturb an ancient possession, and to remove the landmarks which bound and ascertain the inheritance of our fathers, what ought we to feel when a scheme is set on foot to deprive us of the record of our salvation, of the charter of our immortality? Who are they who pretend a right to sit in judgement on the contents of Revelation, to determine what is proper to be communicated, and what withheld, as though they were sifting the chaff from the wheat? Is it come to this, that the medicine of life is to be dealt out with a sparing and cautious hand, and mixed with foreign ingredients, like arsenic or hemlock, which are only safe when administered in a diluted form, and in small quantities? What is it which has lifted these pretenders to such an envied superiority over their fellow-creatures, while the whole species, sick and infirm, are consigned to the skill of the same great Physician, and are either in a state of spiritual death, or under one and the same process of cure?

Apprehensive as I am of exhausting your patience, there are yet two considerations, to which I would direct your attention, sufficient to demonstrate the importance of not relinquishing that right with which God and Nature have invested you.

First, The great mass of mankind have no possible motives to tempt them to pervert the dictates of inspiration. The Bible is safest in the custody of those who have no temptation to abuse it, by forcing upon it a language foreign from its original intention. Such is the precise situation of the great body of the people. Their concern in religion is of the purest and most unsuspicious nature, since the only advantage which it is conceivable they can derive from it, is assistance towards holy living and dying. If it

fail to put them in possession of a share in the common salvation, there is no subordinate end to be answered, no private emolument attainable by its means, to compensate for their loss. If it be ineffectual to enlighten and to save them, there is no other benefit which they can flatter themselves with the hope of deriving from it. You, in this assembly, who sustain no clerical character, possess this advantage, at least, over the ministers of religion, that you have no temptations to make a gain of godliness. Your religion either promotes your eternal welfare, or it is nothing to you. How far this is from being the case with the Romish hierarchy, through all its ranks and gradations, from his Holiness to the meanest ecclesiastic, few of you need to be informed. The loftiest pretensions to universal empire, the prostration of Christendom at their feet, a plenary power of absolution, of opening the gates of purgatory, and of paradise; this gigantic dominion, extending to the living and the dead, founds itself entirely on a perverted interpretation of the Scriptures; and were they laid open to the people in their true intent and meaning, the whole fabric would melt and disappear like a cloud. When we remember this, we cease to be surprised at the extreme animosity which his Holiness has evinced to the free circulation of the Scriptures. Their circulation is the sure presage of his destruction; and the roar of his Bull (if I may be allowed a pun on so serious a subject,) is but the instinctive cry of a beast which feels itself goaded to madness by the operations of the Bible Society. To commit the custody of the Bible to men who have so deep and vital an interest in its suppression, would be to commit the lamb to the care of the wolf. No! my countrymen, the situation of his Holiness possesses nothing in common with ours; and our feelings accord to our situations. He calls for the darkness, (and well he may,) to prevent the detection of his errors; we, for light, to conduct us in the pursuit of truth. He courts the shade, to conceal his enormities; we ask for illumination, to enable us to perform our duties. The book which we are employed in circulating sufficiently solves the problem:—"He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." When the Romish church found she had deviated too far from the religion of the New Testament, to render a reconciliation practicable, she proceeded to take away the key of knowledge, by opposing every possible obstacle to its progress; and, having availed herself of the ignorance of the age and the apathy of the people, to establish her claim to infallibility, she became a standard to herself. Thus she rendered detection impossible; nor did she ever feel herself

safe, till the stage was completely darkened, till every chink and crevice was closed, through which a ray could penetrate. Thus was the reign of superstition established; but, were we to attempt a recital of a thousandth part of the fearful impieties she was guilty of, and the bloody tragedies she acted in the dark, her impostures, oppressions, cruelties, and murders, we should detain you till midnight, and leave the tale half told. Suffice it to observe, that this mystery of iniquity was founded on a prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures, and was completed by reducing them to a monopoly.

Secondly, The next remark to which I would request your attention, is, that heresies have seldom or never taken their rise from the mass of the people. Look at the history, trace the origin of the principal corruptions of Christianity which have prevailed at different periods, and you will uniformly find, that they commenced in the higher classes, among men of leisure and speculation; that they were the product of perverted ingenuity and of unsanctified talent. Adapted to subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition, they were the invention of spiritual wickedness in high places. The commonalty, tenacious of the habits of thinking and acting to which they have been trained, are slow in adopting novelties, and the last to be misled by the illusions of hypothesis, or the false refinements of theory. The progress of opinion is from the higher to the lower orders; and it is as unnatural for it to begin at the bottom, as for water to ascend from the vallies to the hills. The doctrine of transubstantiation is too much at war with common sense, to have originated with the common people, any more than the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, the worship of the host, or the infallibility of the Pope; all of which were gradually obtruded on the laity by the artifices of a designing priesthood, whose interest and ambition they promoted. Far from running into these absurdities of their own accord, the people, harassed, confounded, and dismayed, were hunted into the toils by men who made merchandize of souls. Let but the great body of the people be enlightened by the word of God, let them comprehend its truths, and imbibe its maxims, and they will form the firmest bulwarks against the encroachments of Popery, as well as every other erroneous and delusive system. It is in a virtuous and an enlightened population, and especially in a yeomanry and peasantry, informed and actuated by the true spirit of religion, we look for the security and preservation of its best interests. It was among them that Christianity commenced its earliest triumphs; among them the Reformation begun by Luther found its first and fastest friends; and, as it was in this department of society our holy religion first penetrated, should the time

arrive for its disappearance in other quarters, it is here that it will find its last and safe retreat.

An ingenious allusion was made, in your report, to Catholic emancipation—a subject on which the public mind is much divided. To agitate the question of the expediency of that measure, on the present occasion, would be highly improper; but I may be permitted to remark, that, however our sentiments may vary on the subject of emancipation, considered in a political light, we are unanimous in desiring to bestow that moral emancipation which is of infinitely greater value, and which will best insure the wise improvement of the liberty Catholics possess, as well as of the power they aspire to. We are most solicitous to emancipate them from that intolerable yoke of superstition and priestcraft, under which reason is crippled and made dwarfish, conscience is oppressed, and religion expires. We are perfectly convinced, that nothing will so essentially contribute to raise our fellow-subjects in Ireland to their just, intellectual, and moral elevation, as the wide and unimpeded circulation of the sacred Scriptures.

Let us, then, proceed with unabated ardor in this glorious career. Let us endeavor to give as wide an extension as possible to the waters of life. Let them flow freely, in opposition to the narrow and mischievous policy, which would confine them in artificial pools and reservoirs, where they become stagnant and putrid. Let us join our prayers with our efforts, that the word of God may have "free course, and be glorified," whatever opposing force it may sweep away in its progress; and should his Holiness the Pope, while he is buffeting with the waves, attempting to arrest the current, be thrown down, and his triple crown totter and tumble from his head; instead of feeling the smallest concern, let us rejoice and exult in the sure presage it will afford of the speedy arrival of that long-looked-for moment, when, at the decree of the Eternal, at the oath of the Archangel, Babylon the Great shall sink like lead in the mighty waters.

AN

APPEAL

TO THE PUBLIC,

ON

THE SUBJECT

OF THE

FRAMEWORK-KNITTERS' FUND.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Impressed as the writer of these pages has long been with the critical state of the Stocking Manufactory, and the intolerable evils resulting from a progressive depression of wages, he could not refrain from communicating his sentiments on this most interesting subject. He is aware of his inability to discuss it with that precision and force which superior talents might command. His only apology is, that he has *done what he could.* His reason for suppressing his name,* is simply, that while it might possibly create prejudice in some quarters, he is not aware that it would bestow additional weight in any.

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* This tract, the reader will understand, was first published anonymously; but has since passed under the name of Mr. Hall. It was replied to by Mr. Cobbett, which led to a rejoinder on the part of our author. The latter pamphlet for reasons which it is unnecessary to specify, is not inserted in the present edition. Ed.

APPEAL.

It is with the highest satisfaction I perceive that the wretched state of the laboring mechanics in Leicestershire has at length arrested the attention, and drawn forth the liberality of a discerning public. But, while we rejoice to see such a feeling awakened, we must be permitted to express our surprise and concern at the very scanty and penurious contribution it has hitherto produced. After witnessing such an unexampled depression in the remuneration of labor as to place the means of assistance totally out of the reach of the industrious poor, when the only alternative presented is that of effective aid afforded by the more opulent, or the total ruin and extinction of the laboring classes, it was natural to expect that the extent and magnitude of the exertion would bear some proportion to the greatness of the object, and the exigence of the case. That this expectation is as yet far from being realized, requires no proof; nor will it be posssible to prevent the recurrence of that intolerable state of suffering which we have recently witnessed, without more extensive and vigorous efforts.

It is frequently asserted, we are aware, that the rate of wages, like every other article, should be left to find its own level, and that all attempts at artificial regulation, either by voluntary association or legal enactment, is repugnant to the true principles of political economy. That commerce ought to be left to its native operation, to a much greater extent than it is, we have learned from the highest authority; nor is it proposed to implore interference of legislature in aid of our present object. But there is a peculiarity in the case of manual labor to which we suspect the persons who urge this objection have not attended.

When the price of a particular commodity sinks so low as not to produce the ordinary profits of stock, a part or the whole of the capital is withdrawn; a less quantity is produced in proportion to the diminution of the demand, in consequence of which, the price rises to its former level. Thus the irregularity corrects itself, and

little or no permanent mischief ensues. But the situation of the laborer is widely different; he has no other article to dispose of besides his personal industry and skill, on which he depends for his subsistence from day to day, nor can he, without being reduced to immediate distress, withhold them from the market, or even diminish their exertion to any considerable degree. The only commodity he has to part with is of such a nature, that it will not permit him to adjust the supply to the demand. He must instantly offer it for sale at whatever price it will fetch, or suffer all the agonies of want. Hence this is the kind of property of all others the most defenceless, and which most needs protection. That the rate of wages has a tendency to keep pace with the price of the necessaries of life is undeniable, but, from the cause we have now mentioned, it is long before that tendency becomes effective; the laborer and the mechanic are the *last* who experience the beneficial effect of an elevation in prices.

But admitting the objection to which we have adverted to be more weighty than it is, where is the equity of urging it in opposition to the claims of the laboring classes, while it is treated with the utmost neglect on other occasions? What is the object, let me ask, of the laws for the regulation of trade, which form so large a part of our acts of Parliament, but to secure to certain descriptions of the community a higher price for the respective commodities which they produce, and thus to direct the application of capital to a specific object? What is the design, the avowed object at least of the Corn Bill, but to encourage agriculture by securing a higher price to its productions, than they could command were they exposed to the effects of foreign competition? What is the design of the additional duty lately imposed on foreign wool, but to bestow an artificial elevation on the price of that article, as a means of promoting its domestic growth? And why so extensive a list of prohibitory statutes, except they are intended to encourage our home manufactures, by securing to them a higher price? Not to multiply words on so plain a subject, suffice it to remark that all laws and regulations of the legislature respecting trade and agriculture, with the exception of such as immediately relate to revenue, have for their immediate object the modification of price; it is by that means, and that alone, that they furnish encouragement to that species of productive industry, which it is deemed expedient to favor. Hence it is evident that the vaunted maxim of leaving every kind of production and labor to find its own level is not adhered to; that it has always been violated in this country from the remotest times. An adherence to it would create a total revolution in our mercantile system, and while it is trampled under foot every day, it just commands a sufficient degree of the-

oretic assent, to render it in the hands of the artful and designing a *bug-bear* to deter the humane from rendering effectual assistance to the distressed and laborious part of the community. But what, let me once more ask, what reason can be assigned for leaving this class unprotected, the most helpless in society from the cause already specified; while the agricultural, the manufacturing and the mercantile interests are shielded with jealous attention, by a multitude of legal provisions?

Why a philosophical theory which is violated with impunity every moment, should then only be deemed sacred when it stands opposed to the claims of a starving and industrious population, we are at loss to conjecture. Let it be remembered however, that an application to the legislature forms no part of the present plan; although if every other expedient should fail, we see no reason why its aid should not be exerted in favor of the Leicestershire framework-knitters as well as of the Spitalfield weavers, who were a few years ago effectually relieved by the establishment of a *minimum*,* with the entire approbation of the principal manufacturers. The excellent Mr. Wilberforce had a principal share in procuring that regulation; nor is it to be doubted, that in conjunction with other humane and enlightened senators, he would be ready to exert, if necessary, the same efforts for the mitigation of similar distress.

The measure now intended is of a less bold and hazardous character. It is proposed simply by means of voluntary contribution to afford a subsistence, scanty it will probably be at the best, to that portion of the laboring class who are destitute of employment, that they may not be compelled to offer their labor for next to nothing, and thus reduce the general rate of wages to that scale of depression, which has been already productive of such calamitous effects. On the present system, those who are thrown out of employment are tempted to offer their service for a remuneration totally inadequate to their wants. But a material inequality of wages for the same quantity of work is unnatural, and therefore cannot be permanent; the consequence is that the wages of all the workmen are soon reduced to the rate at which the first hands are engaged. Thus a small surplus of labor beyond what the state of the demand requires, becomes an engine for effecting a deep and universal depression; and the misery of a few, instead of exciting an effort for their relief, becomes the signal for a more extended infliction of the same calamity. To this evil no conceivable remedy, short of legislative interference, can be applied, except the creation of a fund capable of supplying the more press-

* The *lowest* rate at which labor should be paid for.

ing necessities of those whom the vicissitudes of trade may deprive of employment. This is the only expedient that furnishes the faintest prospect of giving permanence and stability to the "Statement" to which the principal manufacturers have agreed; and on the vigor with which it is carried into effect depends our only chance of obviating the recurrence with fresh aggravation, of the distress we have lately witnessed.

The benefits resulting from the successful operation of the measure we are recommending will not be confined to its immediate objects, it will extend its influence to every class of the community; and the alleviation which it will afford to the almost insupportable burthen of the poor rates, will be of eminent advantage to the parishes. Suppose in a particular parish a hundred frames at work, and each of the framework-knitters earns, clear of all deductions, ten shillings a week instead of six, that parish is benefited to the amount of a thousand pounds; and, considering the utter inadequacy of the former wages to procure the necessaries of life, the alteration will be nearly equivalent to an *annual* donation of a thousand pounds to the parochial treasure. That it is the interest of the manufacturing villages to exert themselves to the utmost in perpetuating the present statement, is an inference which must force itself on the attention of the most careless observer, and nothing but the most infatuated preference of the present to the future can prevent them from giving to the fund a liberal support. Tradesmen of every description are deeply interested in the success of the present measure, since the permanent rise of wages will increase the power of purchase, and give a new impulse to every species of trade. Supposing the number engaged in all the various departments of the stocking manufactory to amount to thirty thousand, no extravagant computation, and little less that three hundred thousand pounds in addition to the present sum, will annually find its way into the market; the agriculturist will find his account in the increased demand for raw produce, the manufacturer and the dealer both wholesale and retail, in a more extended purchase of wrought goods. The landed proprietor will also be essentially benefited, for who does not know that the value of land must always bear a certain proportion to the demand for manufactures, and to the general diffusion of prosperity. Thus all orders will reap the advantage of a change of system.

On a subject so immediately connected with the claims of humanity, it is surely not too much to expect that nothing more will be necessary to inspire an aversion to the system recently adopted, than a recollection of its actual effect in the ruin and prostration of the industrious mechanic. That man is little to be envied, whose enjoyments are not essentially embittered by the

prospect of surrounding misery, who daily beholds, with untroubled composure, innumerable countenances clouded with dejection and despair. Were the state of suffering with which we have long been familiar, removed from immediate observation, we could scarcely hear it without agitation; how much more afflicting to be placed in the midst of it, to feel it pressing on our senses in all directions, without the power of contributing any thing to its mitigation or relief, beyond a barren and impotent commiseration. Is there no hazard of contracting a fatal induration by a daily familiarity with indigence which we cannot alleviate, with scenes of woe we can neither remove or diminish? To *go* into the house of mourning is good, since it is adapted to impress salutary lessons; but to dwell in a situation where every house is become such, is a state to which nothing but utter insensibility can be reconciled.

There are, however, higher, if not more affecting considerations connected with the present subject. If the evil which we have now the means of escaping should return, it will be in vain for us to flatter ourselves with a long duration of tranquillity; a starving must not be expected to be a contented population, nor will any change be deprecated by those to whom existence itself has become a burden. The instinctive feelings of nature will urge to some desperate effort, and they will cease to be restrained by legal coercion who already suffer more than the utmost rigor of the law can inflict. The heart that is withered with despair obtains an awful emancipation from the ordinary restraints of human action; and when a considerable portion of the people is reduced to that extremity, what is to be expected but that the physical energies which are found inadequate to the subsistence of their possessors by the exercise of honest industry, will take an unnatural and destructive direction.

The manufacture of this county is so fortunately circumstanced in being exempted from foreign interference and competition, that nothing can materially injure it except its internal mismanagement. In the article of hosiery we possess a monopoly. While cotton thread is allowed to be exported, and to give birth to numerous foreign establishments, the kinds of wool necessary for our manufacture is prohibited from going abroad. We have the exclusive command of the market, and are under no necessity of having recourse to a reduction of price in order to defeat the competition of foreign manufacturers. All is in our own power, and if a spirit of miserable and short-sighted rivalry is suffered to depress the hire, and extinguish the comforts of the laboring mechanic, it is the odious spectacle of a family quarrelling amongst themselves. Secured from external injury, and less af-

fected by the vicissitudes of war and peace than perhaps any other branch of commerce, because it is concerned in an article of the first necessity; those who are employed in it have only to remain true to themselves, and they may bid defiance to every effort of hostility. "If ye bite and devour," says Holy Writ, 'see that ye are not consumed one of another.' What can be more detestable, than to see a system pursued which can have no other possible termination or object, than the sacrifice of the happiness of the many to a few, an inconceivable few, whose prosperity is cemented by the tears of a distressed and ruined population.

In order to give employment to those who are thrown out of work, and to lighten the poor rates, some parishes have established manufactories of their own. While the system of depression continued, it was natural to have recourse to an expedient which accomplished its immediate object. But if it is proposed to give perpetuity to the present "Statement," that practice must be abandoned. The parishes can afford to dispose of their goods at little or no profit; but the regular manufacturers, it is natural to expect, will not submit to be undersold by a class of persons whom they cannot but consider as intruders; hence arises a new source of competition, and a consequent depression of wages. It is in vain to expect that the manufacturer will adhere to a liberal statement of wages while he is exposed to a rivalry conducted upon unequal terms.

It is surely not too much to hope, that the good sense of parishes will prompt them to put a speedy end to this practice, and that no selfish calculation of local or immediate advantage will tempt them to support a system pregnant with extensive mischief.

It gives the writer sincere concern to hear that there are even some framework-knitters themselves so blind to their own interest as to refuse to contribute to the general fund. With men who are resolved to shut their eyes on consequences, and are unwilling to sacrifice the smallest immediate, to the greatest future advantage, it is in vain to reason, since they have renounced the prerogative of thinking beings. As the framework-knitters are the description of persons immediately interested, it is they who must give the first impulse. It is in vain for those to look for help who are unwilling to help themselves, and when so small a portion of their earnings is sufficient, with the assistance of a generous public, to secure them from the recurrence of recent sufferings, it is not in the power of words to express the folly which hesitates to make the necessary sacrifice. The whole system of life is a series of compromises with unavoidable evil, in which material inconveniences are endured for the acquisition of future good; and he who aspires to enjoyments unaccompanied by the necessity of self-

denial and sacrifice, will not retain them long. Such, also, is the power of combination, that small as is the sum which each individual is called to disburse, the amount of numerous contributions will lay a solid foundation for future prosperity, by protecting them from the encroachments of unfeeling rapacity.

It is asserted there are some manufacturers who have absolutely prohibited their workmen from contributing their quota to the fund. For the honor of human nature, we hope the report is unfounded. We are reluctant to suppose there can be found in a Christian country, men so callous to the sentiments of humanity as to interdict the means of self-preservation, or of temper so despotic as to attempt to infringe on the essential right of every reasonable being, to consult his interest by providing for future contingencies. Let it suffice to have refused their aid to their fellow creatures while struggling in the waves, without driving them back when they have gained the shore. We earnestly recommend the periodical publication of a correct list of the contributors and the non-contributors, together with the reasons assigned for the conduct of the latter, that blame may be imputed only where it is due, and the patrons of oppression (if such there be) may be made amenable to the tribunal of public opinion.

From a partial view of the magnitude of the object before us, and of the extent of the mischief which requires to be remedied, those districts which are not the seat of manufacture, have manifested a reluctance to contribute; a narrow and mistaken policy which deserves the severest reprobation. Whether the workmen in the principal manufacture of a populous county sink into wretchedness and beggary, or are maintained in a state of comfort, can never be an uninteresting circumstance to any part of its inhabitants. Humanity apart, it requires but little attention to perceive that as the ability to purchase, and consequently the extent of purchases, is regulated, not by the wants but by the pecuniary resources of the buyer, to those who have any thing to dispose of, the poverty of their customers must necessarily be injurious. But the framework-knitters and their families constitute the most numerous class of consumers in the county, and the quantity of their consumption must be proportioned to the extent of their earnings. The circulation of money depends as much on the wages of labor, as on the profits of stock; and if thirty thousand persons rise from abject poverty to a capacity of commanding a larger share of the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life, the money which procures them will flow into every channel, so as to benefit alike the tradesman, the agriculturist, and the landed proprietor. The infusion of a new *pabulum* of life into the extremities, will strengthen and invigorate the whole body.

Let not the inhabitants of those towns and villages where no manufacture is carried on, suffer themselves to be deluded into false security, and, because they hear not the sound of the knitting frame, nor behold its productions spread before their eyes, flatter themselves with the hope of impunity in the midst of surrounding distress. The ties of civil society are too close and intricate, the reciprocal action of its respective parts too great to admit of a local circumscription of calamity.—The natural effect of a remarkable depression in the staple manufacture of a county is to spread commercial embarrassment and distress throughout the whole; of which we have already had sufficient experience in the difficulties under which trade of every description has labored, in consequence of the paucity of money and the diminution of demand. The tradesman, it is true, feels the effect in its first stage of operation, the agriculturist in the next, in a diminished consumption of his raw produce.

In the moral system, it is a part of the wise arrangements of Providence that no member shall suffer alone; that, if the lower classes are involved in wretchedness and beggary, the more elevated shall not enjoy their prosperity unimpaired. That constitution of society is radically unsound, of which the inferior order is vicious and miserable; a wretched and degraded populace is a rent in the foundation; or if we may be allowed to change the figure, a taint of rottenness at the root of society which will infallibly wither and decay its remotest branches. Alarming as the present aspect of affairs unquestionably is, the most appalling feature of the times is the prevailing discontent of the lower orders, —discontent arising not so much from the infusion of speculative principles as from the impression of actual distress. Alleviate their distress, convince them at least of your solicitude to do it, and you extirpate the seeds of disaffection far more effectually, than by all the arts of intimidation. But if an insensibility to their sufferings in the higher ranks, goads them to despair, nourishes an appetite for change, and prepares them to lend themselves to the sophistry of artful demagogues and unprincipled empirics; what will be the consequence but a divided and distracted empire, where, instead of uniting to consolidate the resources of general prosperity, the necessity of employing one part of the nation in the coercion, or punishment of the other, dissipates its efforts and cripples its energy. We have the highest authority for asserting that a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand;" and surely no schism in the body politic can be more fatal, than that which alienates the hands from the head, the physical strength of society from its presiding intellect.

It may be objected to these observations, that however just,

they are irrelevant to the subject in hand, which relates not to a national, but to a provincial object. To which the reply is obvious, that every manufacturing county constitutes an important part of the nation, and that there is no absurdity in supposing that the arrangement which is adapted to the situation of one, may be applied with equal advantage to another. Be this as it may, if the tranquillity of a central department of the empire can be maintained by a measure, which, while it rescues a numerous description of persons from the deepest misery, is beneficial to all, and burdensome to none, much is contributed to the fund of national prosperity, composed as it is of separate portions of individual enjoyment and security.

Waving for the present the consideration of the tendency of the measure in question to promote the welfare of the nation, the writer of these lines must be permitted to avow his attachment to his *natale solum*, to the soil that gave him birth, which recals the image of his youth, with those affecting recollections which nature longest retains and reluctantly quits. The philanthropy which affects to feel alike for every part of mankind, is false and spurious; that alone is genuine which glows with a warmth proportioned to the nearness of its objects. But who that is not entirely devoid of such sentiments can compare the present condition of this county with the past, without deep emotion? The writer well remembers it, when it was the abode of health and competence; a temperate and unstrained industry diffused plenty through its towns and villages; the harsh and dissonant sound of the loom was not unpleasant to the ear, mingled with the remembrance of the activity which it indicated, and the comfort it produced; the advance of summer invited the peasant to a grateful change of labor, while the village poured forth its cheerful population to assist in preparing the tedded grass, and reap the golden harvest; content resided in its vallies, joy echoed from its hills; the distresses of poverty were almost unknown, except by the idle and the profligate, its natural victims, and even the transition from peace was rather heard at a distance, than felt as a positive calamity. Some provinces, it is confessed, abounded with more splendid objects, with more curious specimens of art, and grander scenes of nature; but it was surpassed by none in the general diffusion of prosperity. But what a contrast is now presented in the languid and emaciated forms, and dejected looks of the industrious mechanic, who with difficulty drags his trembling limbs over scenes where his fathers gazed with rapture, 'pleased with each rural sight, each rural sound.' A rapid depression of wages, like a gangrene, preys upon their vitals and exhausts their strength. The crisis is arrived which is to decide the destiny of this part of the kingdom;

its fate for the present generation, to say the least, depends, under Providence, entirely on the success of the measure now in agitation; and how, let me ask, can its hereditary nobility exert themselves more laudably, than by stretching forth the hand to save from ruin the county which gave them birth, and includes the fund of their wealth, the scene of their magnificence, and the supulchre of their fathers?

Though the appeal is with the utmost propriety made to them in the first instance, it is not confined to that elevated order; there is not a description of persons within the limits of the county who ought to contemplate the crisis with indifference; and so essential is the success of the present expedient to every hope of deliverance, that whatever be his station, he who withholds his quota from the general contribution, may justly consider himself as accessory to its ruin.

If there be any motive wanting, in addition to those which have been already urged, to excite us to exertion, it is found in the exemplary conduct of the principal sufferers. Never were privations so distressing, endured with more manly fortitude; and for my own part I cannot look back on the patience and the constancy displayed through such a protracted scene of suffering, without ascribing it to a calm confidence in that Providence which sooner or later never fails to interpose in behalf of such as trust in it, and which at length has inspired wisdom to discover, and resolution to apply the only remedy. They have deplored their misery, they have exhibited their grievances to the view of the public in the language of nature and of truth, but rarely, if ever, have they forgotten their duties. Far from shrinking from the necessity of making the first sacrifice, they have cheerfully come forward to establish the present fund; to which they have engaged to contribute sixpence a week out of their scanty earnings. We will not suppose for a moment a reluctance on the part of the public to assist and encourage a description of persons, whose welfare is inseparably combined with their own, and who, to the praise of patient endurance under the severest of trials, have added that of united and manly exertion to prevent their recurrence.

CHRISTIANITY

CONSISTENT WITH A

LOVE OF FREEDOM:

BEING AN ANSWER TO

A SERMON

PUBLISHED

BY THE REV. J*** C******,

1791.

PREFACE.

It may be proper just to remark, that the animadversions I have made on Mr. C******'s sermon did not arise from my conviction of there being any thing even of plausibility in his reasonings, but from an apprehension, that certain accidental and occasional prejudices might give some degree of weight to one of the weakest defences of a bad cause that was ever undertaken. I have taken up more time in showing that there is no *proper connexion* between the Unitarian doctrine and the principles of liberty than the subject may seem to require; but this will not be thought superfluous by those who recollect that *that* idea seems to be the great hinge of Mr. C******'s discourse, and that it appears among the orthodox part of the Dissenters to have been productive already of unhappy effects. I shall only add, that these remarks would have appeared much sooner but for severe indisposition, and that I was induced to write them chiefly from a persuasion that they might, perhaps, in the present instance, have somewhat of additional weight as coming from one who is *not* an Unitarian.

Cambridge, September 17, 1791.

Note.—It is after much hesitation and embarrassment, that I have been induced to republish this pamphlet in the present form. I was informed that it has been proscribed by the author; and this was the sole cause of my perplexity. No objection, however, occurs to me of sufficient weight, to justify the suppression of an article which created no little stir in its day, and which is replete with astonishing beauty and power. The chief objection, probably, in the mind of Mr. Hall, to its republication, is a delicate regard for the feelings of the Reverend gentleman, to whom it was originally addressed, and who is still living, in England, at an advanced age. It has been suggested to me, by a highly esteemed friend, whose opinion on this subject is entitled to more respect, from his personal acquaintance with both parties, that this objection

would be, in a great measure, obviated, at least, as it respects the American public, by suppressing all but the initials of the gentleman's name.

Should Mr. Hall ground another objection to its republication, on what may appear to him, in his maturer years, like an unjustifiable ardor of feeling, and vehemence of expression, no reader will be at a loss to find an ample apology for any such supposed defects in the extraordinary excitement of the period in which the pamphlet was written.—Ed.

CHRISTIANITY

CONSISTENT WITH A LOVE OF FREEDOM.

This is a period distinguished for extraordinary occurrences, whether we contemplate the world under its larger divisions, or in respect to those smaller communities and parties, into which it is broken and divided. We have lately witnessed, with astonishment and regret, the attempts of a celebrated orator to overthrow the principles of freedom, which he has rendered himself illustrious by defending; as well as to cover with reproach the characters of those by whom, in the earlier part of life, he was most caressed and distinguished. The success of these efforts is pretty generally known, and is such as it might have been expected would have been sufficient to deter from similar attempts. But we now behold a dissenting minister coming forth to the public under the character of a flatterer of power, and an *accuser of his brethren.* If the splendid eloquence that adorns every part of Mr. Burke's celebrated book cannot shelter the author from confutation, and his system from contempt, Mr. C*****, with talents so far inferior, has but little to expect in the same cause. It is not easy to conceive the motives which could impel him to publish his sermon. From his own account it should seem he was anxious to disabuse the legislature, and to convince them there are many amongst the Dissenters who highly disapprove the sentiments and conduct of the more patriotic part of their brethren. How far he may be qualified from his talents or connexions, as a mouth, to declare the sentiments of any considerable portion of the Dissenters, I shall not pretend to decide, but shall candidly confess, there are not wanting amongst us persons who are ready upon all occasions to oppose those principles on which the very existence of our dissent is founded. Every party will have its apostates of this kind; it is our consolation, however, that their numbers are comparatively small; that they are generally considered as our reproach, and that their conduct is in a great measure the effect

of necessity, as they consist almost entirely of persons who can only make themselves heard by confusion and discord. If our author wishes to persuade the legislature, the friends of arbitrary power are conspicuous for their number or their rank in the dissenting interest, he has most effectually defeated his own intentions, as scarce any thing could give them a meaner opinion of that party, in both these respects, than this publication of its champion. The sermon he has obtruded upon the public is filled with paradoxes of so singular a complexion, and so feebly supported, that I find it difficult to lay hold of any thing in the form of argument, with sufficient steadiness for the purpose of discussion.

I shall endeavor, however, with as much distinctness as I am able, to select the fundamental principles on which the discourse rests, and shall attempt, as I proceed, to demonstrate their falsehood and danger.

Mr. C******'s favorite maxim is the inconsistency of the Christian profession with political science, and the certain injury its spirit and temper must sustain from every kind of interference with the affairs of government. Political subjects he considers as falling within the *peculiar* province of the irreligious; ministers in particular, he maintains, should ever observe, amidst the concussions of party, an entire neutrality, or if at any time they depart from this their natural line of conduct, it should only be in defence of the measures of government, in allaying dissensions, and in convincing the people they are incompetent judges of their rights. These are the servile maxims that run through the whole of this extraordinary discourse; and that I may give a kind of method to the following observations upon them, I shall show in the first place, the relation Christianity bears to civil government, and its consistency with political discussion, as conducted either by ordinary Christians or ministers; in the next place, I shall examine some of the pretences on which the author founds his principles.

SECTION I.

On the Duty of common Christians in Relation to civil Policy.

The momentous errors Mr. C****** has committed, appear to me to have arisen from an inattention to the proper design of Christianity, and the place and station it was intended to occupy. On this subject I beg the reader's attention to the following remarks:

1. Christianity was subsequent to the existence and creation of man. It is an institution intended to improve and ennoble our nature, not by subverting its constitution, or its powers, but by giv-

ing us a more enlarged view of the designs of Providence, and opening a prospect into eternity. As the existence of man is not to be *dated* from the publication of Christianity, so neither is that order of things that flows from his relation to the present world altered or impaired by that divine system of religion. Man, under the Christian dispensation, is not a new structure erected on the ruin of the former; he may rather be compared to an ancient fabric, restored, when it had fallen into decay, and beautified afresh by the hand of its original founder. Since Christianity has made its appearance in the world, he has continued the same kind of being he was before, fills the same scale in the order of existence, and is distinguished by the same propensities and powers.

In short, Christianity is not a re-organization of the principles of man, but an institution for his improvement. Hence it follows, that whatever rights are founded on the constitution of human nature, cannot be diminished or impaired by the introduction of revealed religion, which occupies itself entirely on the interests of a future world, and takes no share in the concerns of the present in any other light than as it is a state of preparation and trial. Christianity is a discovery of a future life, and acquaints us with the means by which its happiness may be secured; civil government is altogether an affair of the present state, and is no more than a provision of human skill, designed to insure freedom and tranquillity during our continuance on this temporary stage of existence. Between institutions so different in their nature and their object, it is plain no real opposition can subsist; and if ever they are represented in this light, or held inconsistent with each other, it must proceed from an ignorance of their respective genius and functions. Our relation to this world demands the existence of civil government; our relation to a future renders us dependent on the aid of the Christian institution; so that in reality there is no kind of contrariety between them, but each may continue, without interference, in its full operation. Mr. C******, however, in support of his absurd and pernicious tenets, always takes care to place civil government and Christianity in opposition, whilst he represents the former as carrying in it somewhat antichristian and profane. Thus he informs us, *that civil government is a stage erected on which man acts out his character, and shews great depravity of heart.* All interference in political parties he styles *an alliance with the world, a neglecting to maintain our separation and to stand upon our own hallowed ground. There is one way,* says he, by which he means to insinuate there is only one, *in which you may all interfere in the government of your country, and that is by prayer to God, by whom kings*

reign. These passages imply that the principles of civil polity and religion must be at perpetual variance, as without this supposition, unsupported as it is in fact, they can have no force or meaning.

2. Mr. C****** misleads his reader, by not distinguishing the innocent entertainments or social duties of our nature, from those acts of piety which fall within the *immediate province* of Christianity.

The employments of our particular calling, the social ties and endearments of life, the improvement of the mind by liberal inquiry and the cultivation of science and of art, form, it is true, no part of the Christian system, for they flourished before it was known; but they are intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of the human race. A Christian should ever act consistently with his profession, but he need not always be attending to the peculiar duties of it. The profession of religion does not oblige us to relinquish any undertaking on account of its being *worldly*, for we must then go out of the world; it is sufficient, that every thing in which we engage, is of such a nature, as will not violate the principles of virtue or occupy so much of our time or attention, as may interfere with more sacred and important duties.

Mr. C****** observes, *Jesus Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in temporal affairs, especially in the concerns of the then existing government;* and hence, he draws a precedent to regulate the conduct of his followers. That our Saviour did not intermeddle with the polity of nations, I am as willing as our author to admit; for the improvement of this any more than any other science, which might be extremely short and defective, formed no part of his mission, and was rendered, besides, quite unnecessary, by that energy of mind which, prompted by curiosity, by our passions, and our wants, will ever be abundantly sufficient to perpetuate and refine every civil or human institution. He never intended that his followers, on becoming Christians, should forget they were men, or consider themselves as idle or uninterested spectators on the great theatre of life. The author's selection of proofs is almost ever unhappy, but in no instance more than the present, when he attempts to establish his doctrine of the unlawfulness of a Christian interfering in the administration of government, on our Saviour's silence respecting it, a circumstance of itself sufficient to support quite a contrary conclusion; for, if it had been his intention to discountenance the study of political subjects, he would have furnished us, without doubt, with some general regulations, some stated form of policy, which should for ever preclude the necessity of such discussion; or if that were

impracticable, have let us into the great secret of living without government; or, lastly, have supplied its place by a theocracy similar to that of the Jews. Nothing of this has he accomplished, and we may therefore rest assured the political affairs of nations are suffered to remain in their ancient channels, and to be conducted as occasions may arise, by Christians or by others, without distinction.

3. The principles of freedom ought, in a more peculiar manner, to be cherished by Christians, because they alone can secure that liberty of conscience, and freedom of inquiry, which is essential to the proper discharge of the duties of their profession. A full toleration of religious opinions, and the protection of all parties in their respective modes of worship, are the natural operations of a free government; and every thing that tends to check or restrain them, materially affects the interests of religion. Aware of the force of religious belief over the mind of man, of the generous independence it inspires, and of the eagerness with which it is cherished and maintained, it is towards this quarter the arm of despotism first directs its attacks, while through every period, the imaginary right of ruling the conscience has been the earliest assumed and the latest relinquished. Under this conviction, an enlightened Christian, when he turns his attention to political occurrences, will rejoice in beholding every advance towards freedom in the government of nations, as it forms not only a barrier to the encroachmens of tyranny, but a security to the diffusion and establishment of truth. A considerable portion of personal freedom may be enjoyed, it is true, under a despotic government, or in other words, a great part of human actions may be left uncontrolled, but with this an enlightened mind will never rest satisfied, because it is at best but an indulgence flowing from motives of policy, or the lenity of the prince, which may be at any time withdrawn by the hand that bestowed it. Upon the same principles, religious toleration may have an accidental and precarious existence, in states whose policy is the most arbitrary; but in such a situation, it seldom lasts long, and can never rest upon a secure and permanent basis, disappearing for the most part along with those temporary views of interest or policy, on which it was founded. The history of every age will attest the truth of this observation.

Mr. Clayton, in order to prepare us to digest his principles, tells us in the first page of his discourse, *that the gospel dispensation is spiritual, the worship it enjoins is simple and easy, and if liberty of conscience be granted, all its exterior order may be regarded under every kind of human government.* This is very true, but it is saying no more, than that the Christian

worship may always be carried on, if it is not interrupted, a point, I presume, no one will contend with him. The question is, can every form of government furnish a *security* for liberty of conscience; or, which is the same thing, can the rights of private judgement be safe under a government, whose professed principle is, that the subject has *no rights at all*, but is a vassal dependent upon his superior lord? Nor is this a futile or chimerical question; it is founded upon fact. The state to which it alludes, is the condition at present, of more than half the nations of Europe; and if there were no better patriots than this author, it would soon be the condition of all. The blessings which we estimate highly, we are naturally eager to perpetuate, and whoever is acquainted with the value of religious freedom, will not be content to suspend it on the clemency of a prince, the indulgence of ministers, or the liberality of bishops, if ever such a thing existed; he will never think it secure, till it has a constitutional basis; nor even then, till, by the general spread of its principles, every individual becomes its guaranty, and every arm ready to be lifted up in its defence. Forms of policy may change, or they may survive the spirit that produced them; but when the seeds of knowledge have been once sown, and have taken root in the human mind, they will advance with a steady growth, and even flourish in those alarming scenes of anarchy and confusion in which the settled order and regular machinery of government, are wrecked and disappear.

Christianity, we see then, instead of weakening our attachment to the principles of freedom, or withdrawing them from our attention, renders them doubly dear to us, by giving us an interest in them proportioned to the value of those religious privileges they secure and protect.

Mr. C****** endeavors to cast reproach on the advocates for liberty, by attempting to discredit their piety, for which purpose he assures us, to be active in this cause is disreputable, and brings the reality of our religion into just suspicion. "*Who are the persons*, he asks, *that embark? Are they the spiritual, humble, and useful teachers, who travail in birth till Christ be formed in the hearts of their hearers? No. They are philosophical opposers of the grand peculiarities of Christianity.*" It is of little consequence of what descriptions of persons the friends of freedom consist, provided their principles are just, and their arguments well founded; but here, as in other places, the author displays an utter ignorance of facts. Men who know no age but their own, must draw their precedents from it; or if Mr. C****** had glanced only towards the history of England, he must have remembered that in the reign of Charles the First and

Second, the chief friends of freedom were the Puritans, of whom many were Republicans, and the remainder zealously attached to a *limited* monarchy. It is to the distinguished exertions of this party, we are in a great measure indebted for the preservation of our free and happy constitution. In those distracted and turbulent times, which preceded the restoration of Charles the Second, the Puritans, who to a devotion the most fervent, united an eager attachment to the doctrines of grace, as they are commonly called, displayed on every occasion a love of freedom, pushed almost to excess; whilst the cavaliers, their opponents, who ridiculed all that was serious, and if they had any religion at all, held sentiments directly repugnant to the tenets of Calvin, were the firm supporters of arbitrary power. If the Unitarians then are at present distinguished for their zeal in the cause of freedom, it cannot be imputed to any alliance between their religious and political opinions, but the conduct natural to a minority, who attempting bold innovations, and maintaining sentiments very different from those which are generally held, are sensible they can only shelter themselves from persecution and reproach, and gain an impartial hearing from the public, by throwing down the barriers of prejudice, and claiming an unlimited freedom of thought.

4. Though Christianity does not assume any immediate direction in the affairs of government, it inculcates those duties, and recommends that spirit, which will ever prompt us to cherish the principles of freedom. It teaches us to check every selfish passion, to consider ourselves as parts of a great community, and to abound in all the fruits of an active benevolence. The particular operation of this principle will be regulated by circumstances as they arise, but our obligation to cultivate it is clear and indubitable. As this author does not pretend, the nature of a government has no connexion with the felicity of those who are the subjects of it, he cannot without the utmost inconsistence deny, that to watch over the interests of our fellow-creatures in this respect, is a branch of the great duty of social benevolence. If we are bound to protect a neighbor, or even an enemy, from violence, to give him raiment when he is naked, or food when he is hungry, much more ought we to do our part, toward the preservation of a free government; the only basis on which the enjoyment of these blessings can securely rest. He who breaks the fetters of slavery, and delivers a nation from thraldom, forms in my opinion the noblest comment on the great law of love, whilst he distributes the greatest blessing which man can receive from man; but next to that is the merit of him, who, in times like the present, watches over the edifice of public liberty, repairs its

foundations, and strengthens its cement, when he beholds it hastening to decay.

It is not in the power of every one, it is true, to benefit his age, or country, in this distinguished manner, and accordingly it is no where expressly commanded; but where this ability exists, it is not diminished by our embracing Christianity, which consecrates every talent to the public good. On whomsoever distinguished endowments are bestowed, as Christians we ought to rejoice, when instead of being wasted in vain and frivolous pursuits, we behold them employed on objects of the greatest general concern; amongst which those principles of freedom will ever be reckoned, which determine the destiny of nations, and the collective felicity of the human race.

5. Mr. C****** expresses an ardent desire for the approach of that period, when all men will be Christians. I have no doubt that this event will take place, and rejoice in the prospect of it; but whenever it arrives, it will be fatal to Mr. C******'s favorite principles; for the professors of Christianity must then become politicians, as the wicked on whom he at present very politely devolves the business of government, will be no more; or, perhaps, he indulges a hope, that even then there will be a sufficient number of sinners left, to conduct political affairs, especially as wars will then cease, and social life be less frequently disturbed by rapine and injustice. It will still, however, be a great hardship, that a handful of the wicked should rule innumerable multitudes of the just, and cannot fail according to our present conceptions, to operate as a kind of check on piety and virtue. How Mr. C****** will settle this point I cannot pretend to say, except he imagines men will be able to subsist without laws or civil regulations, or intends to revive the long exploded doctrine of Papias, respecting the personal reign. Had Christianity been intended only for the benefit of a few, or as the distinction of a small fraternity, there might have been some pretence for setting its profession in opposition to human policy, since it might then have been conducted without their interference; but a religion, which is formed for the whole world, and will finally be embraced by all its inhabitants, can never be clogged with any such impediment, as would render it repugnant to the social existence of mankind.

SECTION II.

On the Duty of Ministers in Respect to civil Policy.

Mr. C****** is extremely severe upon those of his brethren, who forsaking the quiet duties of their profession, as he styles them, have dared to interfere in public affairs. This he considers as a most flagrant offence, an alarming departure from their proper province, and in the fulness of his rage, he heaps upon them every epithet, which contempt, or indignation can suggest; calls them meddling, convivial, political ministers, devoid of all seriousness and dignity. It is rather extraordinary, this severe correction should be administered by a man, who is, at that moment, guilty of the offence he is chastizing; reproaches political preachers in a political sermon; ridicules theories of government, and at the same time advances one of his own, a most wretched one indeed, but delivered in a tone the most arrogant and decisive. It is not political discussion then, it seems, that has ruffled the gentle serenity of our author's temper; for he too, we see, can bend, when it pleases him, from his spiritual elevation, and let fall his oracular responses on the duty of subjects and of kings. But the persons on whom he denounces his anathemas, have presumed to adopt a system of politics inconsistent with his own, and it is less his piety than his pride, that is offended. Instead of submitting to be moulded by any adept in cringes, any posture-master of servility, they have dared to assume the bold and natural port of freemen. It will be unnecessary to say much on the duty of ministers, in respect to political affairs, as many of the reflections which this subject would suggest, have been already advanced under a former head. A few considerations, however, present themselves here, to which I shall beg the reader's attention.

The duties of the ministerial character it will on all hands be confessed, are of a nature the most sacred and important. To them should be directed the first and chief attention of every person who sustains it, and whatever is found to interfere with these sacred engagements, should be relinquished as criminal and improper. But there is no profession which occupies the mind so fully, as not to leave many intervals of leisure, in which objects that lie out of its immediate province, will have a share of our attention; and I see not why these periods of recess may not be employed with as much dignity and advantage, in acquiring an acquaintance with the principles of government, as wasted in frivolous amusements, or an inactive indolence. Mr. C******, with

his usual confidence, lays it down as maxim, that the science of politics cannot be cultivated, without a neglect of ministerial duties; and one would almost be tempted to suppose, he had published his sermom as a confirmation of this remark, as a more striking example of political ignorance in a teacher of religion, has scarce ever been exhibited. As far, therefore, as the preacher himself is concerned, the observation will be admitted in its full force; but he has surely no right to make his own weakness the standard of another's strength.

Political science, as far as it falls under our present contemplation, may be considered in two points of view. It may either intend a discussion of the great objects for which governments are formed, or it may intend a consideration of the means which may be employed, and the particular contrivances that may be fallen upon to accomplish those objects. For example, in vindicating the revolution in France, two distinct methods may be pursued, with equal propriety and success. It may be defended upon its *principles* against the friends of arbitrary power, by displaying the value of freedom, the equal rights of mankind, the folly and injustice of those regal or aristocratic pretensions, by which those rights were invaded; accordingly, in this light it has been justified with the utmost success. Or it may be defended upon its *expedients* by exhibiting the elements of government which it has composed, the laws it has enacted, and the tendency of both, to extend and perpetuate that liberty which is its ultimate object. But though each of these modes of discussion fall within the province of politics, it is obvious the degree of inquiry, of knowledge, and of labor they require, differs widely. The first is a path which has been often and successfully trod, turns upon principles which are common to all times and places, and which demand little else to enforce conviction, than calm and dispassionate attention. The latter method, involving a question of expediency, not of right, would lead into a vast field of detail, would require a thorough acquaintance with the situation of persons and of things, as well as long and intimate acquaintance with human affairs. There are few ministers who have capacity or leisure to become great practical politicians. To explore the intricacies of commercial science, to penetrate the refinements of negotiation, to determine with certainty and precision the balance of power, are undertakings, it will be confessed, which lie very remote from the ministerial department; but the *principles* of government, as it is a contrivance for securing the freedom and happiness of men, may be acquired with great ease.

These principles our ancestors understood well, and it would be no small shame, if, in an age which boasts so much light and

improvement, they were less familiar to us. There is no class of men to whom this species of knowledge is so requisite, on several accounts, as Dissenting ministers. The jealous policy of the establishment, forbids our youth admission into the celebrated seats of learning; our own seminaries, at least, till lately, were almost entirely confined to candidates for the ministry; and on both these accounts, among us, the intellectual improvement of our religious teachers, rises superior to that of private Christians, in a greater degree than in the national church; the influence of their opinions is wider in proportion. Disclaiming as they do, all pretensions to dominion, their public character, their professional leisure, the habits of study and composition which they acquire, concur to point them out as the natural guardians, in some measure, of our liberties and rights. Besides, as they are appointed to teach the whole compass of social duty, the mutual obligations of rulers and subjects, will, of necessity, fall under their notice, and they cannot explain or enforce the *reasons* of submission, without displaying the *proper end* of government, and the *expectations* we may naturally form from it; which, when accurately done will lead into the very depths of political science.

There is another reason, however, distinct from any I have yet mentioned, flowing from the nature of an established religion, why dissenting ministers, above all men, should be well skilled in the principles of freedom. Wherever, as in England, religion is established by law, with splendid emoluments and dignities annexed to its profession, the clergy, who are candidates for these distinctions, will ever be prone to exalt the prerogative, not only to strengthen the arm on which they lean, but that they may the more successfully ingratiate themselves in the favor of the prince, by flattering those ambitious views and passions which are too readily entertained by persons possessed of supreme power. The boasted alliance between church and state, on which so many encomiums have been lavished, seems to have been little more than a compact between the priest and the magistrate, to betray the liberties of mankind, both civil and religious. To this the clergy on their part at least have continued steady, shunning inquiry, fearful of change, blind to the corruptions of government, skilful *to discern the signs of the times*, and eager to improve every opportunity, and to employ all their art and eloquence to extend the prerogative, and smooth the approaches of arbitrary power. Individuals are illustrious exceptions to this censure; it however applies to the body, to none more than to those whose exalted rank and extensive influence determine its complexion and spirit. In this situation, the leaders of that church, in their fatal attempt to recommend and embellish a slavish system of principles, will, I

trust, be ever carefully watched and opposed by those who hold a similar station among the dissenters; that at all events there may remain one asylum to which insulted freedom may retire unmolested.

These considerations are sufficient to justify every dissenting minister in well-timed exertions for the public cause, and from them we may learn what opinion to entertain of Mr. C******'s weak and malignant invectives.

From the general strain of his discourse it would be natural to conclude he was an enemy to every interference of ministers on political occasions; but this is not the case. *Ministers*, says he, *may interfere as peace-makers, and by proper methods should counteract the spirit of faction raised by persons who seem born to vex the state.* After having taught them to remain in a quiet neutrality, he invests them all at once with the high character of arbiters between the contending parties, without considering that an office of so much delicacy would demand a most intimate acquaintance with the pretensions of both. Ministers it should seem, instead of declining political interference, are to become such adepts in the science of government, as to distinguish with precision the complaints of an oppressed party, from the clamors of a faction, to hold the balance between the ruler and the subject with a steady hand and *to point out on every occasion, and counteract the persons who are born to vex the state.* If any should demand by what means they are to furnish themselves for such extraordinary undertakings, he will learn it is not by political investigation or inquiry this profound skill is to be attained, but by a studied inattention and neglect, of which this author, it must be confessed, has given his disciples a most edifying example in his first essay. There is something miraculous in these endowments. This battle is not to the strong, nor these riches to men of understanding. Our author goes a step farther, for when he is in the humor for concessions no man can be more liberal. *So far as revolutions*, says he, *are parts of God's plan of government, a Christian is not to hinder such changes in states as promise an increase of happiness to mankind. But no where in the new testament can a Christian find countenance in becoming a forward active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* A Christian is not to oppose revolutions, as far as they are parts of God's plan of government.

The direction which oracles afford, has ever been complained of for its obscurity; and this of Mr. C******, though no doubt it is fraught with the profoundest wisdom, would have been more useful had it furnished some criterion to distinguish those transactions which *are* parts of God's plan of government. We have

hitherto imagined the elements of nature, and the whole agency of man, are comprehended within the system of divine Providence; but as in this sense every thing becomes a part of the divine plan it cannot be his meaning. Perhaps he means to confine the phrase *of God's plan of Government* to that portion of human agency which is consistent with the divine will, and promises, as he says, an increase of happiness to mankind. If this should be his intention, the sentiment is just, but utterly subversive of the purpose for which it is introduced, as it concurs with the principles of all reformers in leaving us no other direction in these cases, than reason and experience, determined in their exertions, by a regard to the general happiness of mankind. On this basis the wildest projectors profess to erect their improvements. On this principle too do the dissenters proceed, when they call for a repeal of the test act, when they lament the unequal representation of parliament, when they wish to see a period to ministerial corruption, and to the encroachments of an hierarchy equally servile and oppressive; and thus by one unlucky concession this author has admitted the ground work of reform in its fullest extent, and has demolished the whole fabric he was eager to rear. He must not be offended if principles thus corrupt, and thus feebly supported, should meet with the contempt they deserve, but must seek his consolation in his own adage, as the correction of folly is certainly *a part of God's plan of government.* The reader can be at no loss to determine, whom the author intends by *a busy active man in regenerating the civil constitutions of nations.* The occasion of the sermon, and complexion of its sentiments, concur in directing us to Dr. Priestley; a person whom the author seems to regard with a more than *odium theologicum*, with a rancor exceeding even the measure of his profession. The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme, but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favored, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapors which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence the luminary which they cannot hide.

It is a pity, however, our author in reproaching characters

so illustrious was not a little more attentive to facts; for unfortunately for him Dr. Priestley has not in any instance displayed that dissatisfaction to government, with which he is charged so wantonly. In his Lectures on history, and his Essay on civil Government, which of all his publications fall most properly within the sphere of politics, he has delineated the British constitution with great accuracy, and has expressed his warm admiration of it as the best system of policy the sagacity of man has been able to contrive. In his familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham, a much later work, where the seeds of that implacable dislike were scattered which produced the late riots, he has renewed that declaration, and has informed us, that he has been pleasantly ridiculed by his friends, as being an Unitarian in religion, and a Trinitarian in politics. He has lamented, indeed, in common with every enlightened citizen, the existence of certain corruptions, which being gradually introduced into the constitution, have greatly impared its vigor; but in this he had the honor of being followed by the prime minister himself, who began his career by proposing a reform in parliament, merely to court popularity it is true, at a time when it would not have been so safe for him to insult the friends of freedom after having betrayed their interest as he has since found it.

Dr. Priestley has moreover defended with great ability and success the principles of our dissent, exposing, as the very nature of the undertaking demands, the folly and injustice of all clerical usurpations; and on this account, if on no other, he is entitled to the gratitude of his brethren. In addition to this catalogue of crimes, he has ventured to express his satisfaction on the liberation of France; an event, which, promising a firmer establishment to liberty than any recorded in the annals of the world, is contemplated by the friends of arbitrary power throughout Europe with the utmost concern. These are the demerits of Dr. Priestley, for which this political astrologist and sacred calculator of nativities, pronounces upon him that he is *born to vex the state*. The best apology candor can suggest, will be to hope Mr. C****** has never read Dr. Priestley's political works; a conjecture somewhat confirmed from his disclaiming all attention to political theories, and from the extreme ignorance he displays through the whole of his discourse on political topics. Still it is to be wished he would have condescended to understand what he meant to confute, if it had been only to save himself the trouble and disgrace of this publication. The manner in which he speaks of the Birmingham riots, and the cause to which he traces them, are too remarkable to pass unnoticed.

When led, says he, speaking of the sufferers, *by officious zeal*,

from the quiet duties of their profession, into the Senator's province; unhallowed boisterous passions in others; like their own, God may permit to chastise them.' For my own part I was sometime before I could develope this extraordinary passage; but I now find the darkness in which it is veiled is no more than that mystic sublimity, which has always tinctured the language of those who are appointed to interpret the counsels of heaven.

I would not have Mr. C****** deal too freely in these visions, lest the fire and illumination of the prophet should put out the reason of the man, a caution the more necessary in the present instance, as it glimmers so feebly already in several parts of his discourse, that its extinction would not be at all extraordinary. We are, no doubt, much obliged to Mr. C****** for letting us into a secret we could never have learnt any other way. We thank him heartily for informing us that the Birmingham riots were a judgement, and as we would wish to be grateful for such an important communication, we would whisper in his ear in return, that he should be particularly careful not to suffer this itch of prophesying to grow upon him, men being extremely apt in this degenerate age to mistake a prophet for a madman, and to lodge them in the same place of confinement. The best use he could make of his mantle would be to bequeath it to the use of posterity, as for the want of it I am afraid they will be in danger of falling into some very unhappy mistakes. To their unenlightened eyes, it will appear a reproach, that in the eighteenth century, an age that boasts its science and improvement, the first philosopher in Europe, of a character unblemished, and of manners the most mild and gentle, should be torn from his family, and obliged to flee an outcast and a fugitive from the murderous hands of a frantic rabble; but when they learn that there were not wanting teachers of religion, who secretly triumphed in these barbarities, they will pause for a moment, and imagine they are reading the history of Goths or of Vandals. Erroneous as such a judgement must appear in the eyes of Mr. C******, nothing but a ray of his supernatural light could enable us to form a juster decision. Dr. Priestley and his friends are not the first that have suffered in a public cause; and when we recollect, that those, who have sustained similar disasters, have been generally conspicuous for a superior sanctity of character, what but an acquaintance with the counsels of heaven can enable us to distinguish between these two classes of sufferers, and whilst one are the favorites of God, to discern in the other the objects of his vengeance. When we contemplate this extraordinary endowment, we are no longer surprized at the superiority he assumes through the whole of his discourse, nor at that air of confusion and disorder which appears in

it, both of which we impute to his dwelling so much in the insufferable light, and amidst the corruscations and flashes of the divine glory; a sublime but perilous situation, described with great force and beauty by Mr. Gray.

> "He passed the flaming bounds of place and time;
> The living throne, the sapphire blaze
> Where angels tremble, while they gaze
> He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
> Closed his eyes in endless night."

SECTION III.

On the Pretences Mr. C****** advances in Favor of his Principles.

Having endeavored to justify the well-timed exertions of Christians and of ministers, in the cause of freedom, it may not be improper to examine a little more particularly under what pretences Mr. C****** presumes to condemn this conduct.

1. The first that naturally present itself, is drawn from those passages of Scriptures, in which the design of civil government is explained, and the duty of civil submission to authority is enforced. That on which the greatest stress is laid, is found in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers which are, are ordained of God. Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. The ruler is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou doest that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain. Wherefore ye must be subject not only for wrath, but conscience' sake." This passage, which from the time of Sir Robert Filmer to the present day has been the strong hold of the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, will admit of an easy solution, by attending to the nature of Christianity, and the circumstances of its professors during the period it was written. The extraordinary privileges and dignity conferred by the gospel on believers, must have affected the minds of the first Christians, just emerging from the shades of ignorance, and awakened to new hopes, with singular force. Feeling an elevation to which they were strangers before, and looking down upon the world around them, as the vassals of sin and satan, they might be easily tempted to imagine, the restraint of laws could not extend to persons so highly privileged, and that it was ignominious in the free men of Jesus Christ, to submit to the yoke of idolatrous rulers. Natural to their situation as these sentiments might be, none could be conceived of, more detrimental to the credit and propagation of a

rising religion, or more likely to draw down upon its professors the whole weight of the Roman empire, with which they were in no condition to contend. In this situation, it was proper for the Apostle, to remind Christians, their religion did not interfere with the rights of princes, or diminish their obligations to attend to those salutary regulations, which are established for the protection of innocence and the punishment of the guilty. That this only was the intention of the writer, may be inferred from the considerations he adduces to strengthen his advice. He does not draw his arguments for submission from any thing *peculiar* to the *Christian system*, as he must have done, had he intended to oppose that religion to the natural rights of mankind, but from the utility and necessity of civil restraints. The ruler is the minister of God to thee for good, is the reason he urges for submission. Civil government, as if he had said, is a salutary institution, appointed to restrain and punish outrage and injustice, but exhibiting to the quiet and inoffensive, nothing of which they need to be afraid. If thou doest that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the *sword in vain*. He is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Christians were not to consider themselves privileged above their fellow citizens, as their religion conferred upon them no civil immunities, but left them subject to all the ties and restraints, whatever they were, which could be justly imposed by the civil power on any other part of mankind.

The limits of every duty must be determined by its *reasons*, and the only ones assigned *here*, or that *can* be assigned for submission to civil authority, are its *tendency to do good;* wherever, therefore this shall cease to be the case, submission becomes absurd, having no longer any *rational view*. But at what time this evil shall be judged to have arrived, or what remedy it may be proper to apply, Christianity does not decide, but leaves to be determined by an appeal to natural reason and right. By one of the strongest misconceptions in the world, when we are taught that Christianity does not bestow upon us any *new* rights, it has been thought to strip us of our *old;* which is just the same as it would be to conclude, because it did not first furnish us with hands or feet it obliges us to cut them off. Under every form of government, that civil order which affords protection to property, and tranquillity to individuals, must be obeyed, and I have no doubt, that before the revolution in France, they who are now its warmest admirers, had they lived there, would have yielded a quiet submission to its laws, as being conscious the social compact can only be considered as dissolved, by an expression of the general will. In the mean time they would have continued firm in avowing the principles of freedom, and by the spread of political know-

ledge, have endeavored to train and prepare the minds of their fellow citizens, for accomplishing a change so desirable. It is not necessary to enter into a particular examination of the other texts, adduced by Mr. C****** in support of his sentiments, as this in Romans is by much the most to his purpose, and the remarks that have been made upon it may, with very little alteration, be applied to the rest. He refers us to the second chapter of the first epistle of Peter. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Here it is sufficient to remark, all that can be inferred from this passage is, that Christians are not to hold themselves exempt from the obligation of obedience on account of their religion, but to respect legislation as far as it is productive of benefit in social life. With still less propriety, he urges the first of Timothy, "where in the second chapter, we are exhorted to supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." I am unacquainted with any who refuse a compliance with this apostolic admonition, except the Nonjurors may be reckoned of this class, whose political sentiments are of a piece with Mr. C******'s.

Whilst he pleads with so much eagerness for the duty of passive obedience, we are not however to suppose, he wishes to extend it to all mankind. He admits that "society under the wisest regulations, will degenerate, and there will be periods when associated bodies must be resolved again into its first principles." All resistance to authority, every revolution, is not in his own opinion criminal; it is Christians only, who are never to have a share in these transactions, never to assert their rights. With what different sentiments did the great Apostle of the Gentiles contemplate his character, when disdaining to accept a clandestine dismission from an unjust imprisonment, he felt a glow of indignant pride burn upon his cheek, and exclaimed with a Roman energy, "I was free born."

2. Another reason which this author assigns for a blind deference to civil authority is, that Christianity is "*distinct from, and independent of human legislation.*" This principle no Protestant Dissenter will be inclined to question, but instead of lending any support to the system of passive obedience, it will overturn it from its foundation; for if religion be really distinct from, and independent of human legislation, it cannot afford any standard to ascertain its limits, as the moment it is applied to this purpose, it ceases to be a thing distinct and independent. For example it is

not doubted that a Christian may lawfully engage in trade or commerce; but if it be asked why his profession does not interfere with such an undertaking, the proper reply will be, religion is a thing distinct and independent. Should it be again inquired, why a Christian may become a trader, yet must not commit a theft, we should answer, that this latter action is not a thing distinct, or independent of religion, but falls immediately under its cognizance, as a violation of its laws.

Thus it appears, that whatever portion of human conduct is really *independent* of religion, is lawful for that *very reason*, and can then only become criminal or improper, when it is suffered to intrench upon more sacred or important duties. The truth is, between two institutions, such as civil government and religion, which have a separate origin and end, no opposition can subsist, but in the brain of a distempered enthusiast.

The author's text confutes his doctrine, for had our Saviour annihilated our rights he would have become a *judge* and *divider* over us, in the worst sense, if that could be said to be divided which is taken away. When two institutions are affirmed to be distinct and independent it can only mean they do not *interfere;* but that must be a genius of no common size, who can infer from religion not *interfering* in the rights of mankind, that they cease to be, or that the patrimony, over which our Lord declined to exercise *any authority*, he scattered and destroyed.

3. Similar to the last I have always considered, is that pretence for excluding Christians from any concern in political affairs, taken from the conduct of our Saviour. Mr. C****** tells us that Christ uniformly waved interesting himself in the concerns of the then existing government, and to the same purpose he afterwards remarks, he always declined the functions of a civil magistrate.

The most careless reader will remark, that the whole weight of his argument rests upon a supposition, that it is unlawful for a Christian to sustain any other character in civil life, than that in which our Saviour literally appeared; a notion as extravagant as was ever nourished in the brain of the wildest fanatic. Upon this principle he must have gone through such a succession of offices, and engaged in such an endless variety of undertakings, that in place of thirty three years, he needed to have lived thirty three centuries. On this ground the profession of physic is unlawful for a Christian, because our Lord never set up a dispensary; and that of law because he never pleaded at the bar. Next to the weakness of advancing such absurdity, is that of confuting it.

4. The author, in proof of his political tenets, appeals to the

devotional feelings of his hearers. "I ask you, says he, who make conscience of entering into your closets, and shutting your doors and praying to your Father which seeth in secret, what subjects interest you most then? Are not factious passions hushed, the undue heat you felt in political disputation remembered with sorrow!" He must be at a great loss for argument who will have recourse to such loose and flimsy declamation. When engaged in devout admiration of the supreme Being every other object will be lost in the comparison; but this, though the noblest employment of the mind, was never intended to shut out all other concerns.

The affections which unite us to the world, have a large demand upon us and must succeed in their turn. If every thing is to be deemed criminal, that does not interest the attention in the moment of worship, political concerns are not the only ones to be abandoned, but every undertaking of a temporal nature, labour and ingenuity, must cease. Science herself must shroud her light. These are notions rather to be laughed at than confuted, for their extravagance will correct itself. Every attempt that has been made to rear religion on the ruins of nature, or to render it subversive of the economy of life, has hitherto proved unsuccessful, whilst the institutions that have flowed from it, are now scarcely regarded in any other light than as humiliating monuments of human weakness and folly. The natural vigor of the mind when it has once been opened by knowledge and turned towards great and interesting objects will always overpower the illusions of fanaticism; or could Mr. C******'s principles be carried into effect, we should soon behold men returning again to the state of a savage, and a more than monkish barbarity and ignorance would overspread the earth. That abstraction from the world, it is his purpose to recommend, is in truth as inconsistent with the nature of religion as with the state and condition of man; for Christianity does not purpose to take us *out* of the world, but to preserve us from the pollutions which are *in* it.

It is easy to brand a passion for liberty with the odious epithet of faction; no two things, however, can be more opposite. Faction is a combination of a few to oppress the liberties of many; the love of freedom is the impulse of an enlightened and presiding spirit, ever intent upon the welfare of the community, or body to which it belongs, and ready to give the alarm, when it beholds any unlawful conspiracy formed whether it be of rulers or of subjects, with a design to oppress it. Every tory upholds a faction; every whig, as far as he is sincere and well informed, is a friend to the equal liberties of mankind. Absurd as the preacher's appeal must appear, on such an occasion, to the devout feelings of

his hearers, we have no need to decline it. In these solemn moments, factious passions cannot indeed be too much hushed, but that warmth which animates the patriot, which glowed in the breast of a Sidney, or a Hampden, was never chilled or diminished, we may venture to affirm, in its nearest approaches to the uncreated splendor; and if it mingled with their devotion at all could not fail to infuse into it a fresh force and vigor, by drawing them into a closer assimilation to that great Being, who appears under the character of the avenger of the oppressed, and the friend and protector of the human race.

5. Lastly, the author endeavors to discredit the principles of freedom, by holding them up as intimately connected with the Unitarian heresy. "We are not to be surprised, he says, if men who vacate the rule of faith in Jesus Christ, should be defective in deference, and obedient regards to men who are raised to offices of superior influence, for the purposes of civil order and public good." The persons he has in view are the Unitarians, and that my reader may be in full possession of this most curious argument, it may be proper to inform him, that an Unitarian is a person who believes Jesus Christ had no existence till he appeared on our earth, whilst a Trinitarian maintains, that he existed with the Father from all eternity. What possible connexion can he discern between these opinions and the subject of government?

In order to determine, whether the supreme power should be vested in king, lords, and commons, as in England, in an assembly of nobles as in Venice, or in a house of representatives, as in America or France, must we first decide upon the person of Christ? I should imagine we might as well apply to astronomy first, to know whether the earth flattens at the poles. He explains what he means by *vacating* the rule of faith in Christ, when he charges the Unitarians with a partial denial at least, of the inspiration of the Scriptures, particularly the Epistles of St. Paul. But however clear the inspiration of the Scriptures may be, as no one pleads for the inspiration of civil governors, the deference which is due to the first, as coming from God, can be no reason for an unlimited submission to the latter. Yet this is Mr. C******'s argument, and it runs thus. Every opposition to Scripture is criminal because it is inspired, and therefore every resistance to temporal rulers is criminal, though they are *not* inspired.

The number of passages in Paul's Epistles, which treat of civil government, is small, the principal of them have been examined, and whether they are inspired or not, has not the remotest relation to the question before us. The inspiration of an author adds weight to his sentiments, but makes no alteration in his meaning, and unless Mr. C****** can show that Paul inculcates unlimited

submission, the belief of his inspiration can yield no advantage to his cause. Amongst those parties of Christians who have maintained the inspiration of the Scriptures in its utmost extent, the number of such as have inferred from them the doctrine of passive obedience, has been extremely small; it is therefore ridiculous to impute the rejection of this tenet by Unitarians, to a disbelief of plenary inspiration. It behooves Mr. C****** to point out, if he is able, any one of the Unitarians, who ever imagined that Paul means to recommend unlimited obedience; for till that is the case, it is plain, their political opinions cannot have arisen from any contempt of that Apostle's authority.

As there is no foundation, in the nature of things, for imagining any alliance between heretical tenets and the principles of freedom, this notion is equally void of support from fact or history. Were the Socinian sentiments, in particular, productive of any *peculiar impatience under* the restraints of government, this effect could not fail of having made its appearance on their first rise in Poland, while their influence was fresh and vigorous, but nothing of this nature occurred, nor was any such reproach cast upon them. That sect in England which has been always most conspicuous for the love of freedom, have for the most part held sentiments at the greatest remove from Socinianism that can be imagined. The seeds of those political principles which broke out with such vigor in the reign of Charles the First, and have since given rise to the denomination of whigs, were sown in the latter end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by the hand of the Puritans, amongst whom the Unitarian doctrine was then utterly unknown. The Dissenters descended from those illustrious ancestors, and, inheriting their spirit, have been foremost in defence of liberty, not only, or chiefly, of late, since the spread of the Socinian doctrine, but before that system had gained any footing amongst us.

The knowledge and study of the Scriptures, far from favoring the pretensions of despotism, have almost ever diminished it, and been attended with a proportional increase of freedom. The union of protestant Princes preserved the liberties of the Germanic body, when they were in danger of being overwhelmed by the victorious arm of Charles the Fifth; yet a veneration for the Scriptures, at a time when they had almost fallen into oblivion, and an appeal to their decision in all points, was the grand characteristic of the new religion. If we look into Turkey, we shall find the least of that impatience under restraints, Mr. C****** laments of any place in the world, though Paul and his Epistles are not much studied there.

There are not wanting reasons, which at first view might induce us to conclude Unitarianism was less favorable to the love of free-

dom than almost any other system of religious belief. If any party of Christians were ever free from the least tincture of enthusiasm, it is the Unitarian; yet that passion has by every philosopher been judged favorable to liberty; and to its influence, though perhaps improperly, some of its most distinguished exertions have been ascribed. Hume and Bolingbroke, who were Atheists, leaned towards arbitrary power. Owen, Howe, Milton, Baxter, some of the most devout and venerable characters that ever appeared, were warmly attached to liberty, and held sentiments on the subject of government as free and unfettered as Dr. Priestley. Thus every pretence for confounding the attachment to freedom with the sentiments of a religious party, is most abundantly confuted both from reason and from fact. The zeal Unitarians have displayed in defence of civil and religious liberty, is the spirit natural to a minority, who are well aware they are viewed by the ecclesiastical powers with an unparalleled malignity and rancor. Let the Dissenters at large remember they too are a minority, a great minority, and that they must look for their security from the same quarter, not from the compliments of bishops, or presents from maids of honor.*

To abandon principles, which the best and most enlightened men have in all ages held sacred, which the Dissenters in particular have rendered themselves illustrious by defending, which have been sealed and consecrated by the blood of our ancestors, for no other reason than that the Unitarians chance to maintain them, would be a weakness of which a child might be ashamed! Whoever may think fit to take up the gauntlet in the Socinian controversy, will have my warmest good wishes; but let us not employ those arms against each other which were given us for our common defence.

SECTION IV.

On the Test Act.

Amidst all the wild eccentricities, which, abounding in every part of this extraordinary publication, naturally diminish our wonder at any thing such a writer may advance, I confess I am surprised at his declaring his wish for the continuance of the Test Act. This law, enacted in the latter end of the reign of Charles

* Some of my readers perhaps need to be informed that I here allude to Mr. Martin, who for similar services to those Mr. C****** is now performing, has been considerably caressed by certain bishops, who have condescended to notice and to visit him. I think we do not read that Judas had any acquaintance with the high priests, till he came to transact business with them.

II. to secure the nation from Popery, when it stood upon the brink of that precipice, is continued, now that the danger no longer exists which first occasioned it, for the express purpose of preserving the church from the inroads of dissenters. That church, it must be remembered, existed for ages, before it received any such protection; yet it is now the vogue to magnify its importance to that degree, that one would imagine it was its sole prop, whose removal would draw the whole fabric after it, or at least make it totter to its base. Whether these apprehensions were really entertained by the clergy who gave the signal for the commencement of hostilities on a late occasion, or whether they were only impelled by that illiberal tincture, and fixed antipathy to all who differ from them, which hath ever marked their character, may be doubted; but to behold a Dissenting Minister joining with them in an unnatural warfare against his brethren, is a phenomenon so curious, that it prompts us to inquire into its cause. Let us hear his reasons. He and many others were convinced, he tells us, "that some of the persons who applied for the repeal, were influenced by enmity against the doctrinal articles of the established church, and they could not sacrifice their pious regard to truth, though in a church they had separated from, to the policy of men, who, with respect to God our Saviour, only consult how they may cast him down from his excellency." When we hear the clergy exclaim that their church is in danger, we pretty well understand what they mean; they speak broad, as Mr. Burke says, and intend no more than that its emoluments are endangered; but when a serious Dissenter expresses his pious regard to the doctrines of the church, it is the *truth* of those articles he must be supposed to have in view. Let us consider for a moment what advantage the Test Act is capable of yielding them. All those who qualify for civil offices, by a submission to this law, consist of two classes of people; they are either persons who are attached to the articles of the church, from whom therefore no danger could accrue; or they are persons who have signified their assent to doctrines which they inwardly disapprove, and who have qualified themselves for trust by a solemn act of religious deception. It is this latter class alone, it should be remembered, whom the Test Act can at all influence, and thus the only security this celebrated law can afford the articles of the church, is founded in a flagrant violation of truth in the persons who become their guarantees. Every attempt that has been made to uphold religion by the civil arm has reflected disgrace upon its authors; but of all that are recorded in the history of the world, perhaps this is the most absurd in its principle, and the least effectual in its operation. For the truth of sacred mysteries in religion, it appeals to

the corruptest principles of the human heart, and to those *only;* for no one can be tempted by the Test Act to profess an attachment to the doctrines of the church, till he has been already allured by the dignity or emolument of a civil office. By compelling all who exercise any function in the state, from the person who aspires to its highest distinctions, to those who fill the meanest offices in it, to profess that concurrence in religious opinions which is known never to exist, it is adapted beyond any other human invention, to spread amongst all orders of men a contempt for sacred institutions, to enthrone hypocrisy, and reduce deception to a system! The truth of any set of opinions can only be perceived by *evidence;* but what evidence can any one derive from the mere mechanical action of receiving bread and wine at the hands of a parish priest? He who believes them already needs not to be initiated by any such ceremony; and by what magic touch those simple elements are to convert the unbeliever, our author, who is master of so many secrets, has not condescended to explain. He will not pretend to impute the first spread of these doctrines in the infancy of the Christian religion, or their revival at the reformation to any such means, since he imagines he can trace them in the New Testament. It is strange if that evidence which was powerful enough to introduce them where they were unknown, is not sufficient to uphold them where they are already professed and believed. At least the Test Act, it must be confessed, has yielded them no advantage, for they have been controverted with more acrimony, and admitted by a smaller number of persons, since that law was enacted, than in any period preceding.

Were the removal of this Test to overthrow the establishment itself, a consequence at the same time in the highest degree improbable, the articles of the church, if they are true, would remain unendangered, their evidence would continue unimpaired, an appeal to the inspired writings from which they profess to be derived would be open, the liberty of discussion would be admitted in as great an extent as at present; this difference only would occur, that an attachment to them would no longer be suspected of flowing from corrupt and sinister motives. They would cease to be with the clergy the ladder of promotion, the cant of the pulpit, the ridicule of the schools. The futility of this or any other law, as a security to religious doctrines, may be discerned from this single reflection, that in the national church its own articles have for a length of time been either treated with contempt, or maintained with little sincerity, and no zeal; whilst amongst the Dissenters, where they have had no such aids, they have found a congenial soil, and continue to flourish with vigor.

On the political complexion of this Test, as it does not fall so properly within my present view, I shall content myself with remarking, that harmless as it may appear at first sight, it carries in it the seeds of all the persecutions and calamities which have ever been sustained on a religious account. It proscribes not an individual who has been convicted of a crime, but a whole party, as unfit to be trusted by the community to which they belong; and if this stigma can be justly fixed on any set of men, it ought not to stop *here, or any where*, short of the actual excision of those who are thus considered as rotten and incurable members of the political body. In annexing to religious speculation the idea of political default, the principle of this law would justify every excess of severity and rigor. If we are the persons it supposes, its indulgence is weak and contemptible; if we are of a different description, the nature of its pretensions is so extraordinary as to occasion serious alarm, and call aloud for its repeal. Mr. C******, indeed, calls this, and similar laws, a restraint very prudently imposed upon those who dissent from the established religion.*

This restraint, however, is no less than a political annihilation, debarring them, though their talents were ever so splendid, from mingling in the councils, or possessing any share in the administration of their country. With that natural relish for absurdity, which characterizes this author, he imagines they have justly incurred this evil for dissenting from an *erroneous* religion.

He tells us, in the course of his sermon,† that the grand "principle of separation from the church lies in the unworldly nature of our Saviour's kingdom." This reason for separation implies, that any attempt to blend worldly interests or policy with the constitution of a church, is improper; but how could this be done more effectually than by rendering the profession of its articles a preliminary step to every kind of civil pre-eminence. Yet this abuse, which in his own estimation is so enormous as to form the great basis of separation, he wishes to perpetuate; and, all things considered, hopes "that which is at rest will not be disturbed." In another part of his discourse,‡ he asks what temporalities has the church of Christ to expect? It is the mother of harlots, which says, "I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Would any one imagine this was the language of a man, who, in pleading for a Test Act, has rested the support of his creed on those very temporalities he affects so much to disdain, and has committed his religion to the arms of that mother of harlots to be reared and nourished! When speaking of the Test Act in the

* Page 6. † Page 35. ‡ Page 26.

seventh page of his discoure, he thus expresses himself, "Surely the cross of Christ ought not to be insulted by persons eager to press into the temple of Mammon." Who could treat it with more poignant severity than is couched in this declaration; yet this is the language of a person who desires its continuance. In truth, his representations on this subject are pregnant with such contradictions, and rise above each other in so regular a gradation of absurdity as will not easily be conceived, and perhaps hath scarce ever been equalled. At the very outset of his sermon, he declares, "whenever the gospel is secularized it is debased and misrepresented, and in proportion to the quantity of foreign infusions is the efficacy of this saving health diminished." But human ingenuity would be at a loss to conceive a method of secularizing the gospel more completely, than by rendering it the common passport of all who aspire to civil distinctions. I am really weary of exposing the wild and extravagant incoherence of such a reasoner. From a man, who, professing to be the apologist of his party, betrays its interests, and exhibits its most illustrious members to reproach, who himself a Dissenter, applauds the penalties which the hierarchy has inflicted as a *prudent restraint;* who, with the utmost poignance, censures a law which he solemnly invokes the legislature to perpetuate; and proposes to secure the truths of religion, by the "profanation of its Sacraments,* by "debasing the Gospel," and "insulting the Cross;" any thing may be expected but consistence and decency. When such an author assures us he was not impelled by vanity to publish,† we may easily give him credit; but he should remember, though it may be a virtue to subdue vanity, it is base to extinguish shame. The tear which, he tells us, started from the eyes of his audience, we will hope, for their honor, was an effusion of regret, natural to his friends, on hearing him deliver sentiments which they considered as a disgrace to himself, and a calumny on his brethren. His affecting to pour contempt upon Dr. Price, whose talents and character were revered by all parties, and to hold him up as the *corrupter* of the Dissenters, will not fail to awaken the indignation of every generous mind. Whether they were greater friends to their country, whose pride and oppression scattered the flames of discord across the Atlantic, poured desolation into the colonies, dismembered the empire, and involved us in millions of debt; or the man, who, with a warning voice, endeavored to avert those calamities, posterity will decide.

He gives us a pompous enumeration‡ of the piety, learning

* Page 8. † Page 6. ‡ Page 6.

and talents of a large body of his brethren who concur with him in a disapprobation of the theological and political tenets of the Unitarians. The weakness of mingling them together has been shown already; but if these great and eminent men, whom the world never heard of before, possess that zeal for their religion they pretend, let them meet their opponents on the open field of controversy, where they may display their talents and prowess to somewhat more advantage than in *skulking* behind a *consecrated altar*.

There are many particulars in the address and sermon of an extraordiary complexion, which I have not noticed at all, as it was not my intention to follow the author step by step, but rather to collect his scattered representations into some leading points of view. For the same reason, I make no remarks on his barbarous imagery; or his style, every where incoherent and incorrect, sometimes indecent, which cannot fail of disgusting every reader of taste. In a rude daubing peculiar to himself, where in ridicule of Dr. Priestley, he has grouped together a *foreigner*, a *ship*, and *cargo of drugs*, he has unfortunately sketched his own likeness, except in the circumstance of the *ship*, with tolerable accuracy; for, without the apology of having been *shipped* into England, he is certainly a *foreigner* in his native tongue, and his publication will be allowed to be a *drug*.

Had he known to apply the remark with which his address commences, on the utility of accommodating instruction to the exigence of times, he would have been aware, that this is not a season for drawing off the eyes of mankind from political objects. They were in fact never turned towards them with equal ardor, and we may venture to affirm, they will long continue to take that direction. An attention to the political aspect of the world, is not now the fruit of an idle curiosity, or the amusement of a dissipated and frivolous mind, but is awakened and kept alive by occurrences as various as they are extraordinary. There are times when the moral world seems to stand still; there are others when it seems impelled towards its goal, with an accelerated force. The present is a period more interesting, perhaps than any which has been known in the whole flight of time. The scenes of Providence thicken upon us so fast, and are shifted with so strange a rapidity, as if the great drama of the world were drawing to a close. Events have taken place, of late, and revolutions have been effected, which, had they been foretold a very few years ago, would have been viewed as visionary and extravagant, and their influence is yet far from being spent. Europe never presented such a spectacle before, and it is worthy of being contemplated, with the profoundest attention, by all its inhabi-

tants. The empire of darkness and of despotism, has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe. When we see whole kingdoms, after reposing for centuries on the lap of their rulers, start from their slumber, the dignity of man rising up from depression, and tyrants trembling on their thrones, who can remain entirely indifferent, or fail to turn his eye towards a theatre so august and extraordinary? These are a kind of throes and struggles of nature, to which it would be a sullenness to refuse our sympathy. Old foundations are breaking up; new edifices are rearing. Institutions which have been long held in veneration, as the most sublime refinements of human wisdom and policy, which age hath cemented and confirmed, which power hath supported, which eloquence hath conspired to embellish and opulence to enrich, are falling fast into decay. New prospects are opening on every side, of such amazing variety and extent, as to stretch farther than the eye of the most enlightened observer can reach.

Some beneficial effects appear to have taken place already, sufficient to nourish our most sanguine hope of benefits much more extensive. The mischief and folly of wars begin to be understood, and that mild and liberal system of policy adopted, which has ever indeed been the object of prayer to the humane and the devout, but has hitherto remained utterly unknown in the cabinets of princes. As the mind naturally yields to the impression of objects which it contemplates often, we need not wonder, if, amidst events so extraordinary, the human character itself should appear to be altering and improving apace. That fond attachment to ancient institutions, and blind submission to opinions already received, which has ever checked the growth of improvement, and drawn on the greatest benefactors of mankind danger, or neglect, is giving way to a spirit of bold and fearless investigation. Man seems to be becoming more erect and independent. He leans more on himself, less on his fellow creatures. He begins to feel a consciousness in a higher degree of personal dignity, and is less enamored of artificial distinctions. There is some hope of our beholding that simplicity and energy of character, which marks his natural state, blended with the humanity, the elegance and improvement of polished society.

The events which have already taken place, and the further changes they forebode, will open to the contemplative of every character, innumerable sources of reflection. To the philosopher, they present many new and extraordinary facts, where his penetration will find ample scope in attempting to discover their cause, and to predict their effects. He will have an opportunity of viewing mankind in an interesting situation, and of tracing the progress of opinion through channels it has rarely flowed in before.

The politician will feel his attention powerfully awakened, on seeing new maxims of policy introduced, new institutions established, and such a total alteration in the ideas of a great part of the world, as will oblige him to study the art of government as it were afresh. The devout mind will behold in these momentous changes, the finger of God, and discerning in them the dawn of that glorious period, in which wars shall cease, and antichristian tyranny shall fall, will adore that unerring wisdom, whose secret operation never fails to conduct all human affairs to their proper issue, and impels the great actors on that troubled theatre, to fulfil when they least intend it, the counsels of heaven, and the predictions of its prophets.

AN

APOLOGY

FOR THE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS,

AND FOR

GENERAL LIBERTY:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

REMARKS ON BISHOP HORSLEY'S SERMON,

PREACHED JAN. 30, 1793.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

SINCE this pamphlet was first published, the principles it aims to support have received confirmation from such a train of disastrous events, that it might have been hoped we should have learned those lessons from misfortunes, which reason had failed to impress. Uninstructed by our calamities, we still persist in an impious attack on the liberties of France, and are eager to take our part in the great drama of crimes which is acting on the continent of Europe. Meantime, the violence and injustice of the internal administration keeps pace with our iniquities abroad. Liberty and truth are silenced. An unrelenting system of prosecution prevails. The cruel and humiliating sentence passed upon Mr. Muir and Mr. Palmer, men of unblemished morals and of the purest patriotism, the outrages committed on Dr. Priestley, and his intended removal to America, are events which will mark the latter end of the eighteenth century with indelible reproach. But what has liberty to expect from a minister, who has the audacity to assert the King's right to land as many foreign troops as he pleases, without the previous consent of Parliament! If this doctrine be true, the boasted equilibrium of the constitution, all the barriers which the wisdom of our ancestors have opposed to the encroachments of arbitrary power, are idle, ineffectual precautions. For we have only to suppose, for a moment, an inclination in the royal breast to overturn our liberties, and of what avail is the nicest internal arrangement against a foreign force? Our constitution, on this principle, is the absurdest system that was ever conceived; pretending liberty for its object, yet providing no security against the great antagonist and destroyer of liberty, the employment of military power by the chief magistrate. Let a foreign army be introduced into this or any other country, and quartered upon the subject without his consent, and what is there wanting, if such were the design of the prince, to complete the subjection of that country? Will armed foreigners be overaw-

ed by written laws, or unwritten customs, by the legal limitations of power, the paper lines of demarkation? But Mr. Pitt contends, that though the sovereign may land foreign troops at his pleasure, he cannot subsist them without the aid of Parliament. He may overrun his dominions with a mercenary army, it seems, but after he has subdued his subjects, he is compelled to have recourse to them for supplies. What a happy contrivance! Unfortunately, however, it is found that princes with the unlimited command of armies, have hit upon a nearer and more efficacious method of raising supplies than by an act of Parliament. But it is needless any farther to expose the effrontery, or detect the sophistry of this shameless apostate. The character of Pitt is written in sun-beams. A veteran in frauds while in the bloom of youth, betraying first, and then persecuting his earliest friends and connexions, falsifying every promise, and violating every political engagement, ever making the fairest professions a prelude to the darkest actions, punishing with the utmost rigor the publisher of the identical paper he himself had circulated,* are traits in the conduct of Pitt, which entitle him to a fatal preeminence in guilt. The qualities of this man balance in an extraordinary manner, and sustain each other. The influence of his station, the extent of his enormities, invest him with a kind of splendor; and the contempt we feel for his meanness and duplicity is lost in the dread of his machinations and the abhorrence of his crimes. Too long has he insulted the patience of his countrymen; nor ought we, when we observe the indifference with which the iniquities of Pitt's administration are viewed, to reproach the Romans for tamely submitting to the tyranny of Caligula or Domitian.

We had fondly hoped a mild philosophy was about to diffuse over the globe the triumph of liberty and peace. But, alas! these hopes are fled. The Continent presents little but one wide picture of desolation, misery, and crimes; *on the earth distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.*

That the seeds of public convulsions are sown in every country of Europe, (our own not excepted) it were in vain to deny; seeds which, without the wisest precautions, and the most conciliating

* Mr. Holt, a printer, at Newark, is now imprisoned in Newgate for two years, for reprinting, verbatim, An Address to the people on Reform, which was sanctioned for certain, and probably written by, the Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt.

counsels, will break out, it is to be feared, in the overthrow of all governments. How this catastrophe may be averted, or how, should that be impossible, its evils may be mitigated and diminished, demands the deepest consideration of every European statesman. The ordinary routine of ministerial chicanery is quite unequal to the task. A philosophic comprehension of mind, which, leaving the beaten road of politics, shall adapt itself to new situations, and profit by the vicissitudes of opinion, equally removed from an attachment to antiquated forms, and useless innovations, capable of rising above the emergency of the moment, to the most remote consequences of a transaction; combining the past, the present, and the future, and knowing how to defend with firmness, or concede with dignity; these are the qualities which the situation of Europe renders indispensable. It would be a mockery of our present ministry to ask whether *they* possess those qualities.

With respect to the following apology for the freedom of the press, the author begs leave to claim the reader's indulgence to its numerous imperfections, and hopes he will recollect, as an excuse for the warmth of his expressions, it is an eulogium on a *dead friend.*

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

The accidental detention of the following pamphlet in the press longer than was expected, gave me an opportunity, before it was published, of seeing Bishop Horsley's Sermon, preached before the House of Lords, on the 30th of January, and as its contents are relevant to my subject, a few remarks upon it may not be improper.—His Lordship sets out with a severe censure of that "*freedom of dispute*," on matters of "*such high importance as the origin of government and the authority of sovereigns*," in which he laments it has been the "*folly of this country, for several years past*," to indulge. If his Lordship has not inquired into those subjects himself, he can with little propriety pretend to decide in so imperious and peremptory a manner; unless it be a privilege of his office to dogmatize without examination, or he has discovered some nearer road to truth than that of reasoning and argument. It seems a favorite point with a certain description of men, to stop the progress of inquiry, and throw mankind back into the darkness of the middle ages, from a persuasion, that ignorance will augment their power, as objects look largest in a mist. There is, in reality, no other foundation for that alarm which the Bishop expresses. Whatever is not comprehended under Revelation, falls under the inspection of reason; and since, from the whole course of Providence, it is evident that all political events, and all the revolutions of government, are affected by the instrumentality of men, there is no room for supposing them too sacred to be submitted to the human faculties. The more minds there are employed in tracing their principles and effects, the greater probability will there be of the science of civil policy, as well as every other, attaining to perfection.

Bishop Horsley, determined to preserve the character of an original, presents us with a new set of political principles, and endeavors to place the exploded doctrine of passive obedience and non-

resistance upon a new foundation. By a curious distinction between the *ground* of authority and obedience, he rests the former on human compact, the latter on divine obligation. "*It is easy to understand,*" he says, "*that the principle of the private citizen's submission, must be quite a distinct thing from the principle of the sovereign's public title. And for this plain reason; The principle of submission to bind the conscience of every individual, must be something universally known.*" He then proceeds to inform us, that the kingly title in England is founded on the act of settlement; but that as thousands and tens of thousands of the people have never heard of that act, the principle which compels their allegiance, must be something distinct from it, with which they may all be acquainted. In this reasoning, he evidently confounds the obligation of an *individual* to submit to the existing authority, with that of the community collectively considered. For *any particular number* of persons to set themselves by force to oppose the established practice of a state, is a plain violation of the laws of morality, as it would be productive of the utmost disorder; and no government could stand, were it permitted to individuals to counteract the general will, of which, in ordinary cases, legal usages are the interpreter. In the worst state of political society, if a people have not sufficient wisdom or courage to correct its evils and assert their liberty, the attempt of individuals to *force* improvements upon them, is a presumption which merits the severest punishment. Social order would be inevitably dissolved, if every man declined a practical acquiescence in that political regulation which he did not personally approve. The duty of submission is, in this light, founded on principles which hold under every government, and are plain and obvious. But the principle which attaches a people to their allegiance, collectively considered, must exactly coincide with the title to authority; as must be evident from the very meaning of the term authority, which, as distinguished from force, signifies a right to demand obedience. Authority and obedience are correlative terms, and consequently in all respects correspond, and are commensurate with each other.

"*The divine right,*" his Lordship says, "*of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience, is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereign of this country. It is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons. The denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God.*" To invest any human power with these high epi-

thets, is ridiculous at least, if not impious. The right of a prince to the obedience of his subjects, wherever it exists, may be called divine, because we know the Divine Being is the patron of justice and order; but in that sense, the authority of a petty constable is equally divine; nor can the term be applied with any greater propriety to supreme, than to subordinate magistrates. As to "*submission being among the general rules which proceed from the will of God, and have been impressed upon the conscience of every man by the original constitution of the world*," nothing more is comprehended under this pomp of words, than that submission is, for the most part, a duty—a sublime and interesting discovery! The minds of princes are seldom of the firmest texture; and they who fill their heads with the magnificent chimera of divine right, prepare a victim where they intend a god. Some species of government is essential to the well-being of mankind; submission to some species of government is consequently a duty; but what kind of government shall be appointed, and to what limits submission shall extend, are mere human questions, to be adjusted by mere human reason and contrivance.

As the natural consequence of divine right, his Lordship proceeds to inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance, in the most unqualified terms; assuming it as a principle to be acted upon under governments the most oppressive, in which he endeavors to shelter himself under the authority of Paul. The apostolic exhortation, as addressed to a few individuals, and adapted to the local circumstances of Christians of that period, admits an easy solution; but to imagine it prescribes the duty of the Roman empire, and is intended to subject millions to the capricious tyranny of one man, is a reflection as well on the character of Paul, as on Christianity itself.

On principles of reason, the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God, is to consider its influence on the happiness of society; so that, in this view, the question of passive obedience is reduced to a simple issue: Is it best for the human race that every tyrant and usurper be submitted to without check or control? It ought likewise to be remembered, that if the doctrine of passive obedience be true, princes should be taught it, and instructed, that, to whatever excess of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no resistance on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to general good, we may fair-

ly presume it concurs with the will of the Deity; but if it appear pregnant with the most mischievous consequences, it must disclaim such support. From the known perfection of God, we conclude he wills the happiness of mankind; and that though he condescends not to interpose miraculously, that kind of civil polity is most pleasing in his eye, which is productive of the greatest felicity.

On a comparison of free with arbitrary governments, we perceive the former are distinguished from the latter, by imparting a much greater share of happiness to those who live under them; and this in a manner too uniform to be imputed to chance or secret causes. He who wills the end, must will the means which ascertain it. His Lordship endeavors to diminish the dread of despotic government, by observing that, in its worst state, it is attended with more good than ill, and that the "*end of government under all its abuses is generally answered by it.*" Admitting this to be true, it is at best but a consolation proper to be applied where there is no remedy, and affords no reason why we should not mitigate political as well as other evils, when it lies in our power. We endeavor to correct the diseases of the eye, or of any other organ, though the malady be not such as renders it useless.

The doctrine of passive obedience is so repugnant to the genuine feelings of human nature, that it can never be completely acted on; a secret dread that popular vengeance will awake, and nature assert her rights, imposes a restraint which the most determined despotism is not able to shake off. The rude reason of the multitude may be perplexed, but the sentiments of the heart are not easily perverted.

In adjusting the different parts of this theory, the learned Bishop appears a good deal embarrassed. "*It will readily be admitted,*" he says, (p. 9,) "*that of all sovereigns, none reign by so fair and just a title, as those who derive their claim from some such public act (as the act of settlement) of the nation which they govern.*" That there are different degrees in *justice*, and even in *divine right*, (which his Lordship declares all sovereigns possess) is a very singular idea. Common minds would be ready to imagine, however various the modes of *injustice* may be, *justice* were a thing absolute and invariable, nor would they conceive, how "*a divine right, a right the denial of which is high treason against the authority of God,*" can be increased by the act of a nation. But this is not all. It is no just inference (he tells us) that the obligation upon the private

citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised, arises wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. But if the sovereign derives his claim from this act of the nation, how comes it that the obligation of the people to submit to his claim, does not spring from the same act? Because "*in all these causes*," he affirms, "*the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs to advance the new sovereign to his station.*" In the hand of the Supreme Being, the whole agency of men may be considered as an *instrument*; but to make it appear that the right of dominion is independent of the people, men must be shewn to be instruments in political affairs, in a more absolute sense than ordinary. A divine interposition of a more immediate kind, must be shewn, or the mere consideration of God's being the original source of all power, will be a weak reason for absolute submission. Anarchy may have *power* as well as despotism, and is equally a link in the great chain of causes and effects.

It is not a little extraordinary, that Bishop Horsley, the apologist of tyranny, the patron of passive obedience, should affect to admire the British constitution, whose freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not say the Barons at Runnamede acted on his maxims, in extorting the magna charta from King John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry the Third. If he approves of their conduct, he gives up his cause, and is compelled at least to confess the principles of passive obedience were not true at that time; if he disapproves of their conduct, he must, to be consistent, reprobate the restraints which it imposed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his Lordship pretends to applaud, were effected by resistance; the freedom of the British constitution flowed from a departure from passive obedience, and was therefore stained with high treason "*against the authority of God.*" To these conclusions he must inevitably come, unless he can point out something peculiar to the spot of Runnamede, or to the reign of King John, which confines the exception to the general doctrine of submission, to that particular time and place. With whatever colors the advocates of passive obedience may varnish their theories, they must of necessity be enemies to the British constitution. Its spirit they detest; its corruptions they cherish; and if at present they affect a zeal for its preservation, it is only because they despair of any form of government being erected in its stead, which will give equal permanence to

abuses. Afraid to destroy it at once, they take a malignant pleasure in seeing it waste by degrees under the pressure of internal malady.

Whatever bears the semblance of *reasoning*, in Bishop Horsley's discourse, will be found, I trust, to have received a satisfactory answer; but to animadvert with a becoming severity on the temper it displays, is a less easy task. To render him the justice he deserves in that respect, would demand all the fierceness of his character.

We owe him an acknowledgement for the frankness with which he avows his decided preference of the clergy of France to dissenters in England; a sentiment we have often suspected, but have seldom had the satisfaction of seeing openly professed before.

"*None*," he asserts, "*at this season, are more entitled to our offices of love, than those with whom the difference is wide in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rites; those venerable exiles, the prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France.*" Far be it from me to intercept the compassion of the humane from the unhappy of any nation, tongue, or people; but the extreme tenderness he professes for the fallen church of France is well contrasted by his malignity towards dissenters. Bishop Horsley is a man of sense; and though doctrine, discipline, and external rites, comprehend the whole of Christianity, his tender, sympathetic heart is superior to prejudice, and never fails to recognize, in a persecutor, a friend and a brother. Admirable consistence in a Protestant Bishop, to lament over the fallen of that Antichrist, whose overthrow is represented by unerring inspiration as an event the most splendid and happy! It is a shrewd presumption against the utility of religious establishments that they too often become seats of intolerance, instigators to persecution, nurseries of Bonners and of Horsleys.

His Lordship closes his invective against dissenters, and Dr. Priestley in particular, by presenting a prayer in the spirit of an indictment. We are happy to hear of his Lordship's prayers, and are obliged to him for remembering us in them; but should be more sanguine in our expectation of benefit, if we were not informed the prayers of the *righteous* only avail much. "*Miserable men*," he tells us, we "*are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.*" With respect to the first, we must have plenty of that article, since he has distilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only because they are not within the reach of his mighty malice.

It is time to turn from this disgusting picture of sanctimonious

hypocrisy and priestly insolence, to address a word to the reader on the following pamphlet. The political sentiments of Dr. Horsley are in truth of too little consequence in themselves, to engage a moment's curiosity, and deserve attention only as they indicate the spirit of the times. The freedom with which I have pointed out the abuses of government, will be little relished by the pusillanimous and the interested, but is, I am certain, of that nature, which it is the duty of the people of England never to relinquish, or suffer to be impaired by any human force or contrivance. In the present crisis of things, the danger to liberty is extreme, and it is requisite to address a warning voice to the nation, that may disturb its slumbers, if it cannot heal its lethargy. When we look at the distraction and misery of a neighboring country, we behold a scene that is enough to make the most hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution. Nothing but an obstinate adherence to abuses, can ever push the people of England to that fatal extremity. But if the state of things continues to grow worse and worse, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and persecution, the confusion will probably be dreadful, the misery extreme, and the calamities that await us too great for human calculation.

What must be the guilt of those men, who can calmly contemplate the approach of anarchy or despotism, and rather choose to behold the ruin of their country, than resign the smallest pittance of private emolument and advantage. To reconcile the disaffected, to remove discontents, to allay animosities, and open a prospect of increasing happiness and freedom, is yet in our power. But if a contrary course be taken, the sun of Great Britain is set forever, her glory departed, and her history added to the catalogue of the mighty empires which exhibit the instability of all human grandeur, of empires which, after they rose by virtue to be the admiration of the world, sunk by corruption into obscurity and contempt. If any thing shall then remain of her boasted constitution, it will display magnificence in disorder, majestic desolation, Babylon in ruins, where, in the midst of broken arches and fallen columns, posterity will trace the *monuments* only of our ancient freedom !

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE NEW EDITION.

As the following pamphlet has been long out of print, the reader will naturally expect some reason should be assigned for its republication. I might satisfy myself with safely affirming that I have no alternative left but either to publish it myself, or to permit it to be done by others, since the copy-right has long since transpired; and I have been under the necessity of claiming as a favor what I could not insist upon as a right.

In addition to this, a most erroneous inference has been drawn from my suffering it to fall into neglect. It has been often insinuated, that my political principles have undergone a revolution, and that I have renounced the opinions which it was the object of this pamphlet to establish. I must beg leave, however, to assert, that fashionable as such changes have been, and sanctioned by many conspicuous examples, I am not ambitious of the honor attached to this species of conversion, from a conviction that he who has once been the advocate of freedom and of reform, will find it much easier to change his conduct than his principles—to worship the golden image, than to believe in the divinity of the idol. A reluctance to appear as a political writer, an opinion, whether well or ill founded, that the Christian ministry is in danger of losing something of its energy and sanctity by embarking on the stormy element of political debate, were the motives that determined me, and which, had I not already engaged, would probably have effectually deterred me from writing upon politics. These scruples have given way to feelings still stronger, to my extreme aversion to be classed with political apostates, and to the suspicion of being deterred from the honest avowal of my sentiments on subjects of great moment, by hopes and fears to which, through every period of my life, I have been a total stranger. The effect of increasing years has been to augment, if possible, my attachment to the principles of civil and

religious liberty, and to the cause of reform as inseparably combined with their preservation; and few things would give me more uneasiness than to have it supposed I could ever become hostile or indifferent to these objects.

The alterations in the present edition are nearly all of minor importance; they consist chiefly of slight literary corrections, which very rarely affect the sense. It was not my wish or intention to impair the *identity* of the performance. There is, in several parts, an acrimony and vehemence in the language, which the candid reader will put to the account of juvenile ardor; and which, should it be deemed excessive, he will perceive could not be corrected, without producing a new composition. One passage in the preface, delineating the character of the late Bishop Horsley, is omitted. On mature reflection, it appeared to the writer not quite consistent either with the spirit of Christianity, or with the reverence due to departed genius. For the severity with which he has treated the political character of Mr. Pitt, he is not disposed to apologize, because he feels the fullest conviction that the policy, foreign and domestic, of that celebrated statesman, has inflicted a more incurable wound on the Constitution, and entailed more permanent and irreparable calamities on the nation, than that of any other minister in the annals of British history. A simple reflection will be sufficient to evince the unparalleled magnitude of his apostacy, which is, that the memory of the *son* of Lord Chatham, the vehement opposer of the American war, the champion of reform, and the idol of the people, has become the rallying point of toryism, the type and symbol of whatever is most illiberal in principle, and intolerant in practice.

1821.

AN APOLOGY.

SECTION I.

On the right of Public Discussion.

Solon, the celebrated legislator of Athens, we are told, enacted a law for the capital punishment of every citizen who should continue neuter when parties ran high in that republic. He considered, it should seem, the declining to take a decided part on great and critical occasions, an indication of such a culpable indifference to the interests of the commonwealth, as could be expiated only by death. While we blame the rigor of the law, we must confess the principle, on which it was founded, is just and solid. In a political contest, relating to particular men or measures, a well-wisher to his country may be permitted to remain silent; but when the great interests of a nation are at stake, it becomes every man to act with firmness and vigor. I consider the present as a season of this nature, and shall therefore make no apology for laying before the public, the reflections it has suggested.

The most capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy is the liberty of discussing every subject which can fall within the compass of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flourish; but should it be lost or impaired, its principles will neither be well understood nor long retained. To render the magistrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the suppression of opinions, shews an inattention to the nature and design of political society. When a nation form a government, it is not wisdom but *power* which they place in the hand of the magistrate; from whence it follows, his concern is only with those objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account, the administration of justice, the protection of property, and the defence of every member of the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for these may all be accomplished by *power;* but an attempt to distinguish truth from error,

and to countenance one set of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner mischievous and absurd. To comprehend the reasons on which the right of public discussion is founded, it is requisite to remark the difference between *sentiment* and *conduct*. The *behaviour* of men in society will be influenced by motives drawn from the prospect of good and evil; here then is the proper department of government, as it is capable of applying that good and evil by which actions are determined. Truth, on the contrary, is quite of a different nature, being supported only by *evidence*, and, as when this is represented, we cannot withhold our assent, so where this is wanting, no power or authority can command it.

However some may affect to dread controversy, it can never be of ultimate disadvantage to the interests of truth, or the happiness of mankind. Where it is indulged in its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will no doubt be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are sure to be opposed with at least equal ability, and that supperior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a false system will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and every thing estimated at length according to its true value. Publications besides, like every thing else that is human, are of a mixed nature, where truth is often blended with falsehood, and important hints suggested in the midst of much impertinent or pernicious matter; nor is there any way of separating the precious from the vile, but by tolerating the whole. Where the right of unlimited inquiry is exerted, the human faculties will be upon the advance; where it is relinquished, they will be of necessity at a stand, and will probably decline.

If we have recourse to experience, that kind of enlarged experience in particular which history furnishes, we shall not be apt to entertain any violent alarm at the greatest liberty of discussion; we shall there see that to this we are indebted for those improvements in arts and sciences, which have meliorated in so great a degree the condition of mankind. The middle ages, as they are called, the darkest period of which we have any particular accounts, were remarkable for two things; the extreme ignorance that prevailed, and an excessive veneration for received opinions; circumstances, which having been always united, operate on each other, it is plain, as cause and effect. The whole compass of science was in those times subject to restraint; every new opinion was looked upon as dangerous. To affirm the globe we inhabit to be round, was deemed heresy, and for asserting its motion, the immortal Galileo was confined in the prisons of the In-

quisition. Yet, it is remarkable, so little are the human faculties fitted for restraint, that its utmost rigor was never able to affect a thorough unanimity, or to preclude the most alarming discussions and controversies. For no sooner was one point settled than another was started; and as the articles on which men professed to differ were always extremely few and subtle, they came the more easily into contact, and their animosities were the more violent and concentrated. The shape of the tonsure, or manner in which a monk should shave his head, would then throw a whole kingdom into convulsions. In proportion as the world has become more enlightened, this unnatural policy of restraint has retired, the sciences it has entirely abandoned, and has taken its last stand on religion and politics. The first of these was long considered of a nature so peculiarly sacred, that every attempt to alter it, or to impair the reverence for its received institutions, was regarded under the name of heresy as a crime of the first magnitude. Yet, dangerous as free inquiry may have been looked upon when extended to the principles of religion, there is no department where it was more necessary, or its interference more decidely beneficial. By nobly daring to exert it when all the powers on earth were combined in its suppression, did Luther accomplish that reformation which drew forth primitive Christianity, long hidden and concealed under a load of abuses, to the view of an awakened and astonished world. So great is the force of truth when it has once gained the attention, that all the arts and policy of the court of Rome, aided throughout every part of Europe, by a veneration for antiquity, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the cruelty of despots, were fairly baffled and confounded by the opposition of a solitary monk. And had this principle of free inquiry been permitted in succeeding times to have full scope, Christianity would at this period have been much better understood, and the animosity of sects considerably abated. Religious toleration has never been complete even in England; but having prevailed more here than perhaps in any other country, there is no place where the doctrines of religion have been set in so clear a light, or its truths so ably defended. The writings of Deists have contributed much to this end. Whoever will compare the late defences of Christianity by Locke, Butler, or Clark, with those of the ancient apologists, will discern in the former far more precision and an abler method of reasoning than in the latter, which must be attributed chiefly to the superior spirit of inquiry by which modern times are distinguished. Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of discussion, religion, it is plain, hath been a gainer by it; its abuses corrected, and its divine authority settled on a firmer basis than ever.

Though I have taken the liberty of making these preliminary remarks on the influence of free inquiry in general, what I have more immediately in view is, to defend its exercise in relation to government. This being an institution purely human, one would imagine it were the proper province for freedom of discussion in its utmost extent. It is surely just, that every one should have a right to examine those measures by which the happiness of all may be affected. The control of the public mind over the conduct of ministers exerted through the medium of the press, has been regarded by the best writers both in our country and on the continent, as the main support of our liberties. While this remains, we cannot be enslaved; when it is impaired or diminished, we shall soon cease to be free.

Under pretence of its being seditious to express any disapprobation of the *form* of our government, the most alarming attempts are made to wrest the liberty of the press out of our hands. It is far from being my intention to set up a defence of republican principles, as I am persuaded whatever imperfections may attend the British constitution, it is competent to all the ends of government, and the best adapted of any to the *actual* situation of this kingdom. Yet I am convinced there is no crime in being a republican, and that while he obeys the laws, every man has a right to entertain what sentiments he pleases on our form of government, and to discuss this with the same freedom as any other topic. In proof of this, I shall beg the reader's attention to the following arguments.

1. We may apply to this point in particular, the observation that has been made on the influence of free inquiry in general, that it will issue in the firmer establishment of truth, and the overthrow of error. Every thing that is really excellent will bear examination, it will even invite it, and the more narrowly it is surveyed, to the more advantage it will appear. Is our constitution a good one; it will gain in our esteem by the severest inquiry. Is it bad; then its imperfections should be laid open and exposed. Is it, as is generally confessed, of a mixed nature, excellent in theory, but defective in its practice; freedom of discussion will be still requisite to point out the nature and source of its corruptions, and apply suitable remedies. If our constitution be that perfect model of excellence it is represented, it may boldly appeal to the *reason* of an enlightened age, and need not rest on the support of an implicit faith.

2. Government is the creature of the people, and that which they have created they surely have a right to examine. The great Author of Nature having placed the right of dominion in no particular hands, hath left every point relating to it, to be settled

by the consent and approbation of mankind. In spite of the attempts of sophistry to conceal the origin of political right, it must inevitably rest at length on the acquiescence of the people. In the case of individuals it is extremely plain. If one man should overwhelm another with superior force, and after completely subduing him under the name of government, transmit him in this condition to his heirs, every one would exclaim against such an act of injustice. But whether the object of his oppression be one, or a million, can make no difference in its nature, the idea of equity having no relation to that of numbers. Mr. Burke, with some other authors, are aware that an original right of dominion can only be explained by resolving it into the will of the people, yet contend that it becomes inalienable and independent by length of time and prescription. This fatal mistake appears to me to have arisen from confounding the right of dominion with that of private property. Possession for a certain time, it is true, vests in the latter a complete right, or there would be no end to vexation of claims; not to mention that it is of no consequence to society where property lies, provided its regulations be clear, and its possession undisturbed. For the same reason, it is of the essence of private property, to be held for the sole use of the owner, with liberty to employ it in what way he pleases, consistent with the safety of the community. But the right of dominion has none of the qualities that distinguish private possession. It is never indifferent to the community in whose hands it is lodged; nor is it intended in any degree for the benefit of those who conduct it. Being derived from the will of the people, explicit or implied, and existing solely for their use, it can no more become independent of that will, than water can rise above its source. But if we allow the people are the true origin of political power, it is absurd to require them to resign the right of discussing any question that can arise either upon its form or its measures, as this would put it forever out of their power to revoke the trust which they have placed in the hands of their rulers.

3. If it be a crime for a subject of Great Britain to express his disapprobation of that form of government under which he lives, the same conduct must be condemned in the inhabitant of any other country. Perhaps it will be said, a distinction ought to be made on account of the superior excellence of the British Constitution. This superiority I am not disposed to contest; yet cannot allow it to be a proper reply, as it takes for granted that which is supposed to be a matter of debate and inquiry. Let a government be ever so despotic, it is a chance if those who share in the administration, are not loud in proclaiming its excellence. Go into Turkey, and the Pachas of the provinces will probably

tell you, that the Turkish government is the most perfect in the world. If the excellency of a constitution then is assigned as the reason that none should be permitted to censure it, who, I ask, is to determine on this its excellence? If you reply, every man's own reason will determine; you concede the very point I am endeavoring to establish, the liberty of free inquiry; if you reply, our rulers, you admit a principle that equally applies to every government in the world, and will lend no more support to the British constitution than to that of Turkey or Algiers.

4. An inquiry respecting the comparative excellence of civil constitutions can be forbidden on no other pretence, than that of its tending to sedition and anarchy. This plea, however, will have little weight with those who reflect, to how many ill purposes it has been already applied; and that when the example has been once introduced of suppressing opinions on account of their imagined ill tendency, it has seldom been confined within any safe or reasonable bounds. The doctrine of tendencies is extremely subtle and complicated. Whatever would diminish our veneration for the Christian religion, or shake our belief in the being of a God, will be allowed to be of a very evil tendency; yet few, I imagine, who are acquainted with history, would wish to see the writings of skeptics or deists suppressed by law; being persuaded it would be lodging a very dangerous power in the hands of the magistrate, and that truth is best supported by its own evidence. This dread of certain opinions, on account of their tendency, has been the copious spring of all those religious wars and persecutions, which are the disgrace and calamity of modern times.

Whatever danger may result from the freedom of political debate in some countries, no apprehension from that quarter need be entertained in our own. Free inquiry will never endanger the existence of a good government; scarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one. So uncertain is the issue of all revolutions, so turbulent and bloody the scenes that too often usher them in, the prejudice on the side of an ancient establishment so great, and the interests involved in its support so powerful, that while it provides in any tolerable measure for the happiness of the people, it may defy all the efforts of its enemies.

The real danger to every free government is less from its enemies than from itself. Should it resist the most temperate reforms, and maintain its abuses with obstinacy, imputing complaint to faction, calumniating its friends, and smiling only on its flatterers; should it encourage informers, and hold out rewards to treachery, turning every man into a spy, and every neighborhood into the seat of an inquisition, let it not hope it can long conceal its tyranny under the mask of freedom. These are the avenues

through which despotism must enter; these are the arts at which integrity sickens and freedom turns pale.

SECTION II.

On Associations.

The associations that have been formed in various parts of the kingdom, appear to me to have trodden very nearly in the steps I have been describing. Nothing could have justified this extraordinary mode of combination but the actual existence of those insurrections and plots, of which no traces have appeared, except in a speech from the throne. They merit a patent for insurrections, who have discovered the art of conducting them with so much silence and secresy, that in the very places where they are affirmed to have happened, they have been heard of only by rebound from the cabinet. Happy had it been for the repose of unoffending multitudes, if the Associators had been able to put their mobs in possession of this important discovery before they set them in motion.

No sooner had the ministry spread an alarm through the kingdom against republicans and levellers, than an assembly of court-sycophants with a placeman at their head, entered into what they termed an association at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, whence they issued accounts of their proceedings. This was the primitive, the metropolitan association, which, with few exceptions, gave the tone to the succeeding, who did little more than copy its language and its spirit. As the popular ferment has, it may be hoped, by this time in some measure subsided, it may not be improper to endeavor to estimate the utility, and develop the principles of these societies.

1. The first particular that engages the attention, is their *singular* and *unprecedented* nature. The object is altogether new. The political societies that have been hitherto formed, never thought of interfering with the operations of law, but were content with giving, by their union, greater force and publicity to their sentiments. The diffusion of principles was their object, not suppression; and, confiding in the justness of their cause, they challenged their enemies into the field of controversy. These societies, on the other hand, are combined with an express view to extinguish opinions, and to overwhelm freedom of inquiry by the terrors of criminal prosecution. They pretend not to enlighten the people by the spread of political knowledge, or to confute the errors of the system they wish to discountenance; they breathe only the language of menace; their element is indictment and

prosecution, and their criminal justice formed on the model of Rhadamanthus, the poetic judge of hell.

Castigatque, auditque, dolos subigitque fateri.

2. They are not only new in their nature and complexion, but are unsupported by any just pretence of expedience or necessity. The British constitution hath provided ample securities for its stability and permanence. The prerogatives of the crown in all matters touching its dignity, are of a nature so high and weighty as may rather occasion alarm than need corroboration. The office of Attorney General is created for the very purpose of prosecuting sedition, and he has the peculiar privilege of filing a bill against offenders, in the king's name, without the intervention of a grand jury. If the public tranquillity be threatened, the king can embody the militia as well as station the military in the suspected places; and when to this is added the immense patronage and influence which flows from the disposal of seventeen millions a year, it must be evident the stability of the British government can never be shaken by the efforts of any minority whatever. It comprehends within itself all the resources of defence, which the best civil polity ought to possess. The permanence of every government must depend, however, after all, upon opinion, a general persuasion of its excellence, which can never be increased by its assuming a vindictive and sanguinary aspect. While it is the object of the people's approbation, it will be continued, and to support it much beyond that period, by mere force and terror, would be impossible were it just, and unjust were it possible. The law hath amply provided against *overt acts* of sedition and disorder, and to suppress *mere opinions* by any other method than reason and argument, is the height of tyranny. Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, is of so much more importance than the preservation of any constitution, that to infringe the former under pretence of supporting the latter, is to sacrifice the means to the end.

3. In attempting to define the boundary which separates the liberty of the press from its licentiousness, these societies have undertaken a task which they are utterly unable to execute. The line that divides them is too nice and delicate to be perceived by every eye, or to be drawn by every rude and unskilful hand. When a public outrage against the laws is committed, the crime is felt in a moment; but to ascertain the qualities which compose a libel, and to apply with exactness the general idea to every instance and example which may occur, demands an effort of thought and reflection, little likely to be exerted by the great mass

of mankind. Bewildered in a pursuit which they are incapable of conducting with propriety, taught to suspect treason and sedition in every page they read, and in every conversation they hear, the necessary effect of such an employment must be to perplex the understanding, and degrade the heart. An admirable expedient for transforming a great and generous people into a contemptible race of spies and informers!

For private individuals to combine together at all with a view to quicken the vigor of criminal prosecution, is suspicious at least, if not illegal; in a case where the liberty of the press is concerned, all such combinations are utterly improper. The faults and the excellencies of a book are often so blended, the motives of a writer so difficult to ascertain, and the mischiefs of servile restraint so alarming, that the criminality of a book should always be left to be determined by the particular circumstances of the case. As one would rather see many criminals escape, than the punishment of one innocent person, so it is infinitely better a multitude of errors should be propagated, than one truth be suppressed.

If the suppression of Mr. Paine's pamphlet be the object of these societies, they are ridiculous in the extreme; for the circulation of his works ceased the moment they were declared a libel; if any other publication be intended, they are premature and impertinent, in presuming to anticipate the decision of the courts.

4. Admitting, however, the principle on which they are founded to be ever so just and proper, they are highly impolitic. All violence exerted towards opinions which falls short of *extermination*, serves no other purpose than to render them more known, and ultimately to increase the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are false may be dissipated by the force of argument; when they are true, their punishment draws towards them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more lasting weight and pressure on the mind. The progress of reason is aided in this case by the passions, and finds in curiosity, compassion, and resentment powerful auxiliaries.

When public discontents are allowed to vent themselves in reasoning and discourse, they subside into a calm; but their confinement in the bosom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture. The reason of this is obvious; as men are seldom disposed to complain till they at least imagine themselves injured, so there is no injury which they will remember so long or resent so deeply, as that of being threatened into silence. This seems like adding triumph to oppression, and insult to injury. The apparent tranquillity which may ensue, is delusive and ominous; it is that awful stillness which nature feels, while she is awaiting the discharge of the gathered tempest.

The professed object of these associations is to strengthen the hands of government; but there is one way in which it may strengthen its own hands most effectually; recommended by a very venerable authority, though one from which it hath taken but few lessons. "He that hath *clean hands*," saith a sage adviser, "shall grow stronger and stronger." If the government wishes to become more vigorous, let it first become more pure, lest an addition to its strength should only increase its capacity for mischief.

There is a characteristic feature attending these associations, which is sufficient to acquaint us with their real origin and spirit, that is, the silence, almost total, which they maintain respecting political abuses. Had they been intended, as their title imports, merely to furnish an antidote to the spread of republican schemes and doctrines, they would have loudly asserted the necessity of reform, as a conciliatory principle, a centre of union, in which the virtuous of all descriptions might have concurred. But this, however conducive to the good of the people, would have defeated their whole project, which consisted in availing themselves of an alarm which they had artfully prepared, in order to withdraw the public attention from real grievances to imaginary dangers. The Hercules of reform had penetrated the Augean stable of abuses; the fabric of corruption, hitherto deemed sacred, began to totter, and its upholders were apprehensive their iniquity was almost full. In this perplexity, they embraced an occasion afforded them by the spread of certain bold speculations, (speculations which owed their success to the corruptions of government) to diffuse a panic, and to drown the justest complaints in unmeaning clamor. The plan of associating, thus commencing in corruption, and propagated by imitation and by fear, had for its *pretext* the fear of republicanism; for its *object*, the perpetuity of abuses. Associations in this light may be considered as mirrors placed to advantage for reflecting the finesses and tricks of the ministry. At present they are playing into each other's hands, and no doubt find great entertainment in deceiving the nation. But let them be aware lest it should be found, after all, none are so much duped as themselves. Wisdom and truth, the offspring of the sky, are immortal; but cunning and deception, the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment, must pass away.

The candor and sincerity of these associators is of a piece with their other virtues; for while they profess to be combined in order to prevent riots and insurrections, attempted to be raised by republicans and levellers, they can neither point out the persons to whom that description applies, nor mention a single riot that was not fomented by their principles and engaged on their side. There have been three riots in England of late, on a political ac-

count, one at Birmingham, one at Manchester, and one at Cambridge; each of which has been levelled against Dissenters and friends of reform.*

The Crown and Anchor Association, as it was first in order of time, seems also determined, by pushing to a greater length the maxims of arbitrary power, to maintain its pre-eminence in every other respect. The divine right of monarchy, the sacred anointing of kings, passive obedience and non-resistance, are the hemlock and night-shade which these physicians have prescribed for the health of the nation; and are yet but a specimen of a more fertile crop which they have promised out of the hot-bed of their depravity. The opinions which they have associated to suppress, are contained, they tell us, in the terms liberty and equality; after which they proceed to a dull harangue on the mischiefs that must flow from equalizing property. All mankind, they gravely tell us, are not equal in virtue, as if that were not sufficiently evident from the existence of their society. The notion of equality in property was never seriously cherished in the mind of any man, unless for the purpose of calumny; and the *term* transplanted from a neighboring country, never intended *there* any thing more than *equality of rights*, as opposed to feudal oppression and hereditary distinctions. An equality of rights may consist with the greatest inequality between the things to which those rights extend. It belongs to the very nature of *property*, for the owner to have a full and complete right to that which he possesses, and consequently for all properties to have *equal* rights; but who is so ridiculous as to infer from thence, that the *possessions* themselves are equal? A more alarming idea cannot be spread among the people, than that there is a large party ready to abet them in any enterprise of depredation and plunder. As all men do not know that the element of the associators is calumny, they are really in danger for a while of being believed, and must thank themselves if they should realize the plan of equality their own malice has invented.

I am happy to find that Mr. Law, a very respectable gentleman, who had joined the Crown and Anchor society, has publicly withdrawn his name, disgusted with their conduct; by whom we are

* The conduct of an honorable member of the House of Commons, respecting the last of these, was extremely illiberal. He informed the House, that the riot at Cambridge was nothing more than that the mob compelled Mr. Musgrave, one of his constituents, who had been heard to speak seditious words, to sing, 'God save the King;' a statement in which he was utterly mistaken. Mr. Musgrave, with whom I have the pleasure of being well acquainted, was neither guilty of uttering seditious discourse, nor did he, I am certain, comply with the requisition. His whole crime consists in the love of his country, and a zeal for parliamentary reform. It would be happy for this nation, if a portion only of the integrity and disinterested virtue which adorn his character, could be infused into our great men.

informed they receive anonymous letters, vilifying the characters of persons of the first eminence, and that they are in avowed alliance with the ministry for prosecutions, whom they entreat to order the *Solicitor General to proceed on their suggestions.* When such a society declares "*itself to be unconnected with any political party,*" our respect for human nature impels us to believe it, and to hope their appearance may be considered as an era in the annals of corruption, which will transmit their names to posterity with the encomiums they deserve. With sycophants so base and venal, no argument or remonstrance can be expected to have any success. It is in vain to apply to reason when it is perverted and abused, to shame when it is extinguished, to a conscience which has ceased to admonish. I shall therefore leave them in the undisturbed possession of that true philosophical indifference, which steels them against the reproaches of their own hearts, and the contempt of all honest men.

All the associations, it is true, do not breathe the spirit which disgraces that of the Crown and Anchor. But they all concur in establishing a political test, on the first appearance of which the friends of liberty should make a stand. The opinions proposed may be innocent, but the precedent is fatal; and the moment subscription becomes the price of security, the Rubicon is passed. Emboldened by the success of this expedient, its authors will venture on more vigorous measures; test will steal upon test, and the bounds of tolerated opinion will be continually narrowed, till we awake under the fangs of a relentless despotism.

SECTION III.

On a Reform of Parliament.

Whatever difference of opinion may take place in points of less importance, there is one in which the friends of freedom are entirely agreed, that is, the necessity of reform in the representation. The theory of the English constitution presents three independent powers; the King, as executive head, with a negative in the legislature, an hereditary House of Peers, and an assembly of Commons, who are appointed to represent the nation at large. From this enumeration it is plain, the people of England can have no liberty, that is, no share in forming the laws, but what they exert through the medium of the last of those bodies; nor then, but in proportion to its independence of the other. The independence, therefore, of the House of Commons is the column on which the whole fabric of our liberty rests. Representation may be consid-

ered as complete when it collects to a sufficient extent, and transmits with perfect fidelity, the real sentiments of the people; but this it may fail of accomplishing through various causes. If its electors are but a handful of people, and of a peculiar order and description; if its duration is sufficient to enable it to imbibe the spirit of a corporation; if its integrity be corrupted by treasury influence, or warped by the prospect of places and pensions; it may, by these means, not only fail of the end of its appointment, but fall into such an entire dependence on the executive branch, as to become a most dangerous instrument of arbitrary power. The usurpation of the emperors at Rome would not have been safe, unless it had concealed itself behind the formalities of a senate.

The confused and inadequate state of our representation, at present, is too obvious to escape the attention of the most careless observer. While through the fluctuation of human affairs, many towns of ancient note have fallen into decay, and the increase of commerce has raised obscure hamlets to splendor and distinction, the state of representation standing still amidst these vast changes, points back to an order of things which no longer subsists. The opulent towns of Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, send no members to parliament; the decayed boroughs of Cornwall appoint a multitude of representatives. Old Sarum sends two members, though there are not more than one or two families residing in it. The disproportion between those who vote for representatives and the people at large is so great, that the majority of our House of Commons is chosen by less than eight thousand, in a kingdom consisting of as many millions. Mr. Burgh, in his excellent political disquisitions, has made a very laborious calculation on this head, from which it appears, that the affairs of this great empire are decided by the suffrages of between five and six thousand electors; so that our representation, instead of being co-extended with the people, fails of this in a proportion that is truly enormous. The qualifications, moreover, that confer the right of election, are capricious and irregular. In some places it belongs to the corporation, or to those whom they think proper to make free; in some, to every house-keeper; in others, it is attached to a particular estate, whose proprietor is absolute lord of the borough, of which he makes his advantage, by representing it himself, or disposing of it to the best bidder. In counties, the right of election is annexed only to one kind of property, that of freehold; the proprietor of copyhold land being entirely deprived of it, though his political situation is precisely the same.

The consequence of this perplexity in the qualifications of electors is often a tedious scrutiny and examination before a committee of the House of Commons, prolonged to such a length, that

there is no time when there are not some boroughs entirely unrepresented. These gross defects in our representation have struck all sensible men very forcibly; even Mr. Paley, a courtly writer in the main, declares, the bulk of the inhabitants of this country have little more concern in the appointment of parliament, than the subjects of the Grand Seignior at Constantinople.

On the propriety of the several plans which have been proposed to remedy these evils, it is not for me to decide; I shall choose rather to point out two general principles, which ought, in my opinion, to pervade every plan of parliamentary reform; the first of which respects the mode of election, the second the independence of the elected. In order to give the people a true representation, let its basis be enlarged, and the duration of parliaments shortened. The first of these improvements would diminish bribery and corruption, lessen the violence and tumult of elections, and secure to the people a real and unequivocal organ for the expression of their sentiments.

Were every householder in town and country permitted to vote, the number of electors would be so great, that as no art or industry would be able to bias their minds, so no sums of money would be sufficient to win their suffrages. The plan which the Duke of Richmond recommended was, if I mistake not, still more comprehensive, including all that were of age, except menial servants. By this means, the different passions and prejudices of men would check each other, the predominance of any particular or local interest be kept down, and from the whole there would result that *general impression*, which would convey with precision the unbiassed sense of the people.

But besides this, another great improvement, in my opinion, would be, to shorten the duration of parliament, by bringing it back to one year. The *Michel Gremote*, or great council of the kingdom, was appointed to meet under Alfred twice a year, and by divers ancient statutes after the conquest, the king was bound to summon a parliament every year or oftener, if need be; when to remedy the looseness of this latter phrase, by the sixteenth of Charles the Second it was enacted, the holding of parliaments should not be intermitted above three years at most; and in the first of King William, it is declared as one of the rights of the people, that, for redress of all grievances and preserving the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently; which was again reduced to a certainty by another statute, which enacts, that a new parliament shall be called within three years after the termination of the former. To this term did they continue limited till the reign of George the First; when, after the rebellion of fifteen, the septennial act was passed, under the pretence of diminishing the ex-

pense of elections, and preserving the kingdom against the designs of the Pretender. A noble lord observed, on that occasion, he was at an utter loss to describe the nature of this prolonged parliament, unless he were allowed to borrow a phrase from the Athanasian Creed; for it was, "neither created, nor begotten, but proceeding." Without disputing the upright intentions of the authors of this act, it is plain, they might, on the same principle, have voted themselves perpetual; and their conduct will ever remain a monument of that short-sightedness in politics, which, in providing for the pressure of the moment, puts to hazard the liberty and happiness of future times. It is intolerable, that in so large a space of a man's life as seven years, he should never be able to correct the error he may have committed in the choice of a representative, but be compelled to see him every year dipping deeper into corruption; a helpless spectator of the contempt of his interests, and the ruin of his country. During the present period of parliaments, a nation may sustain the greatest possible changes; may descend, by a succession of ill counsels, from the highest pinnacle of its fortunes, to the lowest point of depression; its treasure exhausted, its credit sunk, and its weight almost completely annihilated in the scale of empire. Ruin and felicity are seldom dispensed by the same hand, nor is it likely any succor in calamity should flow from the wisdom and virtue of those by whose folly and wickedness it was inflicted.

The union between a representative and his constituents, ought to be strict and entire; but the septennial act has rendered it little more than nominal. The duration of parliament sets its members at a distance from the people, begets a notion of independence, and gives the minister so much leisure to insinuate himself into their graces, that before the period is expired, they become very mild and complying. Sir Robert Walpole used to say, that "every man had his price;" a maxim on which he relied with so much security, that he declared he seldom troubled himself with the election of members, but rather chose to stay and buy them up when they came to market. A very interesting work, lately published, entitled, "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," unfolds some parts of this mystery of iniquity, which the reader will probably think equally new and surprising. There is a regular office, it seems, that of manager of the House of Commons, which generally devolves on one of the secretaries of state, and consists in securing, at all events, a majority in parliament by a judicious application of promises and bribes. The sums disbursed by this honorable office are involved under the heard of Secret Service Money; and so delicate is this employment of manager of the House of Commons considered, that we have an account in the above

mentioned treatise, of a new arrangement of ministry, which failed for no other reason, than that the different parties could not agree on the proper person to fill it.*

This secret influence which prevails, must be allowed to be extremely disgraceful; nor can it ever be effectually remedied, but by contracting the duration of parliaments.

If it be objected to annual parliaments, that by this means the tumult and riot attendant on elections will be oftener repeated; it ought to be remembered, that their duration is the chief source of these disorders. Render a seat in the House of Commons of less value, and you diminish at once the violence of the struggle. In America, the election of representatives takes place throughout that vast continent, in one day, with the greatest tranquillity.

In a mixed constitution like ours, it is impossible to estimate the importance of an independent parliament; for as it is here our freedom consists, if this barrier to the encroachments of arbitrary power once fails, we can oppose no other. Should the King attempt to govern without a parliament, or should the upper house pretend to legislate independently of the lower, we should immediately take the alarm; but if the House of Commons falls insensibly under the control of the other two branches of the legislature, our danger is greater, because our apprehensions are less. The forms of a free constitution surviving when its spirit is extinct, would perpetuate slavery by rendering it more concealed and secure. On this account, I apprehend, did Montesquieu predict the loss of our freedom, from the legislative power becoming more corrupt than the executive; a crisis to which, if it has not arrived already, it is hastening apace. The immortal Locke, far from looking with the indifference too common on the abuses in our representation, considered all improper influence exerted in that quarter as threatening the very dissolution of government. "*Thus*, says he, *to regulate candidates and electors, and new-model the ways of election, what is it but to cut up the government by the roots, and poison the very fountain of public security.*"

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* As I have taken my information on this head entirely on the authority of the work called, "Anecdotes of Lord Chatham," the reader may not be displeased with the following extract, vol. ii. p. 121. "The management of the House of Commons, as it is called, is a confidential department unknown to the constitution. In the public accounts it is immersed under the head of secret service money. It is usually given to the secretary of state when that post is filled by a commoner. The business of the department, is to distribute with *art* and *policy*, amongst the members who have no ostensible places, sums of money, for their support during the session; besides contracts, lottery tickets, and other douceurs. It is no uncommon circumstance, at the end of a session, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thousand pounds for *his services*."

No enormity can subsist long without meeting with advocates; on which account we need not wonder, that the corruption of parliament has been justified under the mild denomination of influence, though it must pain every virtuous mind to see the enlightened Paley engaged in its defence. If a member votes consistently with his convictions, his conduct in that instance has not been determined by influence; but if he votes otherwise, give it what gentle name you please, he forfeits his integrity; nor is it possible to mark the boundaries which should limit his compliance; for if he may deviate a little, to attain the See of Winchester, he may certainly step a little farther, to reach the dignity of Primate. How familiar must the practice of corruption have become, when a philosophical moralist, a minister of religion, of great talents and virtue, in the calm retirement of his study, does not hesitate to become its public apologist.

The necessity of a reform in the constitution of parliament is in nothing more obvious than in the ascendency of the aristocracy. This Colossus bestrides both houses of parliament; legislates in one and exerts a domineering influence over the other. It is humiliating at the approach of an election, to see a whole county send a deputation to an Earl or Duke, and beg a representative as you would beg an alms. A multitude of laws have been framed, it is true, to prevent all interference of peers in elections; but they neither are nor can be effectual, while the House of Commons opens its doors to their sons and brethren. If our liberty depends on the balance and control of the respective orders in the state, it must be extremely absurd to blend them together, by placing the father in one department of the legislature, and his family in the other.

Freedom is supposed by some to derive great security from the existence of a regular opposition; an expedient which is, in my opinion, both the offspring and the cherisher of faction. That a minister should be opposed, when his measures are destructive to his country, can admit of no doubt; that a systematic opposition should be maintained against any man, merely as a minister, without regard to the principles he may profess, or the measures he may propose, which is intended by a regular opposition, appears to me a most corrupt and unprincipled maxim. When a legislative assembly is thus thrown into parties, distinguished by no leading principle, however warm and animated their debates, it is plain, they display only a struggle for the emoluments of office. This the people discern, and in consequence, listen with very little attention to the representations of the minister on one hand, or the minority on the other; being persuaded the only real difference between them is, that the one is anxious to gain, what

the other is anxious to keep. If a measure be good, it is of no importance to the nation from whom it proceeds: yet will it be esteemed by the opposition a point of honor, not to let it pass without throwing every obstruction in its way. If we listen to the minister for the time being, the nation is always flourishing and happy; if we hearken to the opposition, it is a chance if it be not on the brink of destruction. In an assembly convened to deliberate on the affairs of a nation, how disgusting to hear the members perpetually talk of their connexions, and their resolution to act with a particular set of men, when if they have happened, by chance, to vote according to their convictions rather than their party, half their speeches are made up of apologies for a conduct so new and unexpected. When they see men united who agree in nothing but their hostility to the minister, the people fall at first into amazement and irresolution; till perceiving political debate is a mere scramble for profit and power, they endeavour to become as corrupt as their betters. It is not in that roar of faction which deafens the ear and sickens the heart, the still voice of Liberty is heard. She turns from the disgusting scene, and regards these struggles as the pangs and convulsions in which she is doomed to expire.

The æra of parties, flowing from the animation of freedom, is ever followed by an æra of faction, which marks its feebleness and decay. Parties are founded on *principle*, factions on *men;* under the first, the people are contending respecting the system that shall be pursued; under the second, they are candidates for servitude, and are only debating *whose livery* they shall wear. The purest times of the Roman republic were distinguished by violent dissensions; but they consisted in the jealousy of the several *orders* of the state among each other; on the ascendance of the patricians on the one side, and the plebeians on the other; a useful struggle, which maintained the balance and equipoise of the constitution. In the progress of corruption things took a turn; the permanent parties which sprang from the fixed principles of government were lost, and the citizens arranged themselves under the standard of particular leaders, being bandied into factions, under Marius or Sylla, Cæsar or Pompey; while the republic stood by without any interest in the dispute, a passive and helpless victim. The crisis of the fall of freedom in different nations, with respect to the causes that produce it, is extremely uniform. After the manner of the ancient factions, we hear much in England of the Bedford party, the Rockingham party, the Portland party, when it would puzzle the wisest man to point out their political distinction. The useful jealousy of the separate orders is extinct, being all melted down and blended into one mass of corruption.

The House of Commons looks with no jealousy on the House of Lords, nor the House of Lords on the House of Commons; the struggle in both is maintained by the ambition of powerful individuals and families, between whom the kingdom is thrown as a prize, and the moment they unite, they perpetuate its subjection and divide its spoils.

From a late instance, we see they quarrel only about the partition of the prey, but are unanimous in defending it. To the honor of Mr. Fox, and the band of illustrious patriots of which he is the leader, it will however be remembered, that they stood firm against a host of opponents, when, assailed by every species of calumny and invective, they had nothing to expect but the reproaches of the present, and the admiration of all future times. If any thing can rekindle the sparks of freedom, it will be the flame of their eloquence; if any thing can reanimate her faded form, it will be the vigor of such minds.

The disordered state of our representation, it is acknowledged on all hands, must be remedied, some time or other; but it is contended, that it would be improper, at present, on account of the political ferment that occupies the minds of men, and the progress of republican principles; a plausible objection, if delay can restore public tranquillity: but unless I am greatly mistaken, it will have just a contrary effect. It is hard to conceive, how the discontent that flows from the abuses of government can be allayed by their being perpetuated. If they are of such a nature that they can neither be palliated nor denied, and are made the ground of invective against the whole of our constitution, are not they its best friends who wish to cut off this occasion of scandal and complaint? The *theory* of our constitution, we say, and justly, has been the admiration of the world; the cavils of its enemies, then, derive their force entirely from the disagreement between that theory and its practice; nothing therefore remains, but to bring them as near as human affairs will admit, to a perfect correspondence. This will cut up faction by the roots, and immediately distinguish those who wish to reform the constitution, from those who wish its subversion. Since the abuses are real, the longer they are continued the more they will be known; the discontented will be always gaining ground, and though repulsed, will return to the charge with redoubled vigor and advantage. Let reform be considered as a chirurgical operation, if you please, but since the constitution must undergo it or die, it is best to submit before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the disease. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom, as an argument for delay, ought to teach us a contrary lesson. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been steadily resisted, and remedies been applied,

as evils appeared, instead of piling them up as precedents, the disorders of government could never have arisen to that enormous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire necessity of building the whole fabric of political society afresh. It seems an infatuation in governments, that in tranquil times, they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints; till public resentment kindling, they find when it is too late that in their eagerness to retain every thing, they have lost all.

The pretence of Mr. Pitt and his friends for delaying this great business, are so utterly inconsistent, that it is too plain they are averse in reality to its ever taking place. When Mr. Pitt is reminded that he himself, at the beginning of his ministry, recommended parliamentary reform, he replies, it was necessary then, on account of the calamitous state of the nation, just emerged from an unsuccessful war, and filled with gloom and disquiet. But unless the people are libelled, they now are still more discontented; with this difference, that their uneasiness formerly arose from events but remotely connected with unequal representation; but that this is now the chief ground of complaint. It is absurd, however, to rest the propriety of reform on any turn of public affairs. If it be not requisite to secure our freedom, it is vain and useless; but if it be a proper means of preserving that blessing, the nation will need it as much in peace as in war. When we wish to retain those habits, which we know it were best to relinquish, we are extremely ready to be soothed with momentary pretences for delay, though they appear, on reflection, to be drawn from quite opposite topics, and therefore to be equally applicable to all times and seasons.

A similar delusion is practised in the conduct of public affairs. If the people be tranquil and composed, and have not caught the passion of reform, it is impolitic, say the ministry, to disturb their minds, by agitating a question that lies at rest; if they are awakened, and touched with a conviction of the abuse, we must wait, say they, till the ferment subsides, and not lessen our dignity by seeming to yield to popular clamor; if we are at peace, and commerce flourishes, it is concluded we cannot need any improvement, in circumstances so prosperous and happy; if on the other hand, we are at war, and our affairs unfortunate, an amendment in the representation is dreaded, as it would seem an acknowledgement, that our calamities flowed from the ill conduct of parliament. Now, as the nation must always be in one or other of these situations, the conclusion is, the period of reform can never arrive at all.

This pretence for delay will appear the more extraordinary in the British ministry, from a comparison of the exploits they have

performed, with the task they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt; for cementing a system of corruption, that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage; for carrying havoc and devastation to the remotest extremities of the globe; for accumulating taxes which famish the peasant and reward the parasite; for bandying the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public spirit; for the completion of these achievements they have suffered no opportunity to escape them. Elementary treatises on time mention various arrangements and divisions, but none have ever touched on the chronology of statesmen. These are a generation, who measure their time not so much by the revolutions of the sun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two æras particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period they are in the ministry, and the other when they are out; which have a very different effect on their sentiments and reasoning. Their course commences in the character of friends to the people, whose grievances they display in all the colors of variegated diction; but the moment they step over the threshold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes seem lessened, the people rise from their depression, the nation flourishes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradise, or mending the air of elysium.

SECTION IV.

On Theories and the Rights of Man.

Among the many alarming symptoms of the present time, it is not the least, that there is a prevailing disposition to hold in contempt, the *Theory* of liberty as false and visionary. For my own part, it is my determination never to be deterred by an obnoxious name, from an open avowal of any principles that appear useful and important. Were the ridicule now cast on the Rights of Man confined to a mere phrase, as the title of a book, it were of little consequence; but when *that* is made the pretence for deriding the doctrine itself, it is matter of serious alarm.

To place the rights of man as the basis of lawful government, is not peculiar to Mr. Paine; but was done more than a century ago by men of no less eminence than Sidney and Locke. It is therefore extremely disingenuous to impute the system to Mr. Paine as its author. His structure may be false and erroneous, but the foundation was laid by other hands. That there are *natural rights*, or in other words, a certain liberty which men may exercise, independent of permission from society, can scarcely be

doubted by those who comprehend the meaning of the terms. Every man must have a natural right to use his limbs in what manner he pleases, that is not injurious to another. In like manner, he must have a right to worship God after the mode he thinks acceptable; or in other words, he ought not to be compelled to consult any thing but his own conscience. These are a specimen of those rights which may properly be termed *natural*; for, as philosophers speak of the primary qualities of matter, they cannot be increased or diminished. We cannot conceive the the right of using our limbs to be created by soceity, or to be rendered more complete by any human agreement or compact.

But there still remains a question, whether this natural liberty must not be considered as entirely relinquished when we become members of society. It is pretended, that the moment we quit a state of *nature*, as we have given up the control of our actions in return for the superior advantages of law and government, we can never appeal again to any original principles, but must rest content with the advantages that are secured by the terms of the society. These are the views which distinguish the political writings of Mr. Burke, an author whose splendid and unequalled powers have given a vogue and fashion to certain tenets, which from any other pen would have appeared abject and contemptible. In the field of reason the encounter would not be difficult, but who can withstand the fascination and magic of his eloquence! The excursions of his genius are immense! His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every scene of the creation, and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a masterpiece of pathetic composition; so select are its images, so fraught with tenderness, and so rich with colors, "dipt in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reasoner, but must resign all pretensions to taste and sensibility. His imagination is in truth only too prolific; a world of itself, where he dwells in the midst of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments, and starts, like Prospero, at the spectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated, rather than distinct; and the light he has let in on the British Constitution in particular, resembles the colored effulgence of a painted medium, a kind of mimic twilight, solemn and soothing to the senses, but better fitted for ornament than use.

A book has lately been published, under the title of "Happiness and Rights," written by Mr. Hey, a respectable member of the University of Cambridge, whose professed object is, with Mr. Burke, to overturn the doctrine of natural rights. The few remarks I may make upon it are less on account of any merit in the

work itself, than on account of its author, who being a member of considerable standing in the most liberal of our universities, may be presumed to speak the sentiments of that learned body. The chief difference between his theory and Mr. Burke's seems to be the denial of the existence of any rights that can be denominated natural, which Mr. Burke only supposed *resigned* on the formation of political society. "*The rights*," says Mr. Hey, "*I can conjecture (for it is but a conjecture) to belong to me as a mere man, are so uncertain, and comparatively so unimportant, while the rights I feel myself possessed of in civil society are so great, so numerous, and many of them so well defined, that I am strongly inclined to consider society, as creating or giving my rights, rather than recognizing and securing what I could have claimed if I had lived in an unconnected state.*" [p. 137.]

As government implies restraint, it is plain a portion of our freedom is given up, by entering into it; the only question can then be, how far this resignation extends, whether to a part or to the whole. This point may, perhaps, be determined by the following reflections.

1. The advantages that civil power can procure to a community are *partial*. A small part, in comparison of the condition of man, can fall within its influence. Allowing it to be a rational institution, it must have that end in view, which a reasonable man would propose by appointing it; nor can it imply any greater sacrifice than is strictly necessary to its attainment. But on what account is it requisite to unite in political society? Plainly to guard against the injury of others; for were there no injustice among mankind, no protection would be needed; no *public force* necessary; every man might be left without restraint or control. The attainment of all possible good then is *not* the purpose of laws, but to secure us from external injury and violence; and as the means must be proportioned to the end, it is absurd to suppose, that by submitting to civil power, with a view to some *particular* benefits, we should be understood to hold all our advantages dependent upon that authority. Civil restraints imply nothing more than a surrender of our liberty in some points, in order to maintain it undisturbed in others of more importance. Thus we give up the liberty of repelling force by force, in return for a more equal administration of justice than private resentment would permit. But there are some rights which cannot with any propriety be yielded up to human authority, because they are perfectly consistent with every benefit its appointment can procure. The free use of our faculties in distinguishing truth from falsehood, the exertion of corporeal powers without injury to others, the choice of a religion and worship, are branches of natural free-

dom which no government can justly alter or diminish, because their restraint cannot conduce to that security which is its proper object. Government, like every other contrivance, has a *specific* end; it implies the resignation of just as much liberty as is needful to attain it; whatever is demanded more is superfluous, a species of tyranny which ought to be corrected by withdrawing it. The relation of master and servant, of pupil and instructor, of the respective members of a family to their head, all include some restraint, some abridgement of natural liberty. But in these cases it is not pretended, that the surrender is total; and why should this be supposed to take place in political society, which is *one* of the relations of human life? This would be to render the foundation infinitely broader than the superstructure.

2. From the notion that political society precludes an appeal to natural rights, the greatest absurdities must ensue. If that idea be just, it is improper to say of any administration, that it is despotic or oppressive, unless it has receded from its first form and model. Civil power can never exceed its limits, until it deviates into a new track. For if every portion of natural freedom be given up by yielding to civil authority, we can never claim any other liberties than those precise ones which were ascertained in its first formation. The vassals of despotism may complain, perhaps of the hardships which they suffer, but, unless it appear they are of *a new kind*, no injury is done them, for no right is violated. Rights are either natural or artificial; the first cannot be pleaded after they are relinquished, and the second cannot be impaired but by a departure from ancient precedents. If a man should be unfortunate enough to live under the dominion of a prince, who, like the monarchs of Persia, could murder his subjects at will, he may be unhappy, but cannot complain; for, on Mr. Hey's theory, he never had any rights but what were created by society; and on Mr. Burke's, he has forever relinquished them. The claims of *nature* being set aside, and the constitution of the government despotic from the beginning, his misery involves no injustice, and admits of no remedy. It requires little discernment to see that this theory rivets the chains of despotism, and shuts out from the political world the smallest glimpse of emancipation or improvement. Its language is, he that is a slave, let him be a slave still.

3. It is incumbent on Mr. Burke and his followers to ascertain the *time* when natural rights are relinquished. Mr. Hey is content with tracing their existence to society, while Mr. Burke, more moderate of the two, admitting their foundation in nature, only contends that regular government absorbs and swallows them up, bestowing artificial advantages in exchange. But at what period, it may be inquired, shall we date this wonderful revolution in the

social condition of man? If we say it was as early as the first dawn of society, natural liberty had never any existence at all, since there are no traces even in tradition, of a period when men were utterly unconnected with each other. If we say this complete surrender took place with the first rudiments of law and government in every particular community, on what principle were subsequent improvements introduced? Mr. Burke is fond of resting our liberties on Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights; but he ought to remember, that as they do not carry us to the commencement of our government, which was established ages before, our forefathers had long ago resigned their natural liberty. If those famous stipulations only recognized such privileges as were in force before, they have no claim to be considered as the foundations of our constitution; but if they formed an *era* in the annals of freedom, they must have been erected on the basis of those natural rights which Mr. Burke ridicules and explodes. When our ancestors made those demands, it is evident they did not suppose an appeal to the rights of nature precluded. Every step a civilized nation can take towards a more equal administration, is either an assertion of its natural liberty, or a criminal encroachment on just authority. The influence of government on the stock of natural rights, may be compared to that of a manufactory on the rude produce; it adds nothing to its quantity, but only qualifies and fits it for use. Political arrangement is more or less perfect in proportion as it enables us to exert our natural liberty to the greatest advantage; if it is diverted to any other purpose, it is made the instrument of gratifying the passions of a few, or imposing greater restraint than its object prescribes, it degenerates into tyranny and oppression.

The greatest objection to these principles is their perspicuity, which makes them ill relished by those whose interest it is to hide the nature of government from vulgar eyes, and induce a persuasion that it is a secret which can only be unfolded to the *initiated* under the conduct of Mr. Burke, the great *Hierophant* and revealer of the mysteries. A mystery and a trick are generally two sides of the same object, according as it is turned to the view of the beholder.

The doctrine of Mr. Locke and his followers is founded on the natural equality of mankind; for as no man can have any natural or inherent right to rule any more than another, it necessarily follows, that a claim to dominion, wherever it is lodged, must be ultimately referred back to the explicit or implied consent of the people. Whatever source of civil authority is assigned different from this, will be found to resolve itself into *mere force*. But as the natural equality of one generation is the same with that of an-

other, the people have always the same right to new-model their government, and set aside their rulers. This right, like every other, may be exerted capriciously and absurdly; but no human power can have any pretensions to intercept its exercise. For civil rulers cannot be considered as having any claims, that are co-extended with those of the people, nor as forming a party separate from the nation. They are appointed by the community to *execute* its will, not to *oppose* it; to manage the *public*, not to pursue any *private* or *particular* interests. Are all the existing authorities in a state, to lie then, it may be said, at the mercy of the populace, liable to be dissipated by the first breath of public discontent? By no means; they are to be respected and obeyed, as interpreters of the public will. Till they are set aside by the unequivocal voice of the people, they are a law to every member of the community. To resist them, is rebellion; and for any particular set of men to attempt their subversion by force, is a heinous crime, as they represent and embody the collective majesty of the state. They are the exponents, to use the language of algebra, of the precise quantity of liberty the people have thought fit to legalize and secure. But though they are a law to every member of the society separately considered, they cannot bind the society itself, or prevent it, when it shall think proper, from forming an entire new arrangement; a right that no compact can alienate or diminish, and which has been exerted as often as a free government has been formed. On this account, in resolving the right of dominion into compact, Mr. Locke appears to me somewhat inconsistent, or he has expressed himself with less clearness and accuracy than was usual with that great philosopher. There must have been a previous right to insist on stipulations, in those who formed them; nor is there any reason why one race of men is not as competent to that purpose as another.

With the enemies of freedom it is a usual artifice to represent the sovereignty of the people as a license to anarchy and disorder. But the tracing up civil power to that source will not diminish our obligation to obey; it only explains its reasons, and settles it on clear, determinate principles. It turns blind submission into rational obedience, tempers the passion for liberty with the love of order, and places mankind in a happy medium, between the extremes of anarchy on the one side, and oppression on the other. It is the polar star that will conduct us safe over the ocean of political debate and speculation, the law of laws, the legislator of legislators.

To reply to all the objections that have been advanced against this doctrine, would be a useless task, and exhaust the patience of the reader; but there is one drawn from the idea of a majority,

much insisted on by Mr. Burke, and Mr. Hey, of which the latter gentleman is so enamored, that he has spread it out into a multitude of pages. They assert, that the theory of natural rights can never be realized, because every member of the community cannot concur in the choice of a government, and the minority being compelled to yield to the decisions of the majority, are under tyrannical restraint. To this reasoning it is a sufficient answer, that if a number of men act together at all, the necessity of being determined by the sense of the majority, in the last resort, is so obvious, that it is always implied. An exact concurrence of many particular wills is impossible, and therefore when each taken separately has precisely the same influence, there can be no hardship in suffering the result to remain at issue till it is determined by the coincidence of the greater number. The idea of *natural liberty*, at least, is so little violated by this method of proceeding, that it is no more than what takes place every day in the smallest society, where the necessity of being determined by the voice of the majority is so plain. that it is scarcely ever reflected upon. The defenders of the rights of man mean not to contend for impossibilities. We never hear of a right to fly, or to make two and two five. If the majority of a nation approve its government, it is in this respect as free as the smallest association or club; any thing beyond which, must be visionary and romantic.

The next objection Mr. Hey insists upon is, if possible, still more frivolous, turning on the case of young persons during minority. He contends, that as some of these have more sense than may be found among common mechanics and the lowest of the people, *natural right* demands their inclinations to be consulted in political arrangements. Were there any method of ascertaining exactly the degree of understanding possessed by young persons during their minority, so as to distinguish early intellects from the less mature, there would be some force in the objection; in the present case, the whole supposition is no more than one of those chimeras which this gentleman is ever fond of combatting, with the same gravity, and to as little purpose, as Don Quixote his windmill.

The period of minority, it is true, varies in different countries, and is perhaps best determined every where by ancient custom and habit. An early maturity may confer on sixteen more sagacity than is sometimes found at sixty; but what then? A wise government, having for its object human nature at large, will be adapted, not to its accidental deviations, but to its usual aspects and appearances. For an answer to his argument against natural rights, drawn from the exclusion of women from political power, I beg leave to refer the author to the ingenious Miss Wolsten-

croft, the eloquent patroness of female claims; unless, perhaps, every other empire may appear mean in the estimation of those, who possess, with an uncontrolled authority, the empire of the heart.

"The situation," says Mr. Hey, (p. 137) "in which any man finds himself placed, when he arrives at the power of reflecting, appears to be the consequence of a vast train of events, extending backwards hundreds or thousands of years, for aught he can tell, and totally baffling all the attempts at comprehension by human faculties."

From hence he concludes, all inquiry into the rights of man should be forborne. "What rights this Being (God) may have possibly intended that I might claim from beings like myself, if He had thought proper that I had lived amongst them in an *unconnected* state, that is to say, what are the rights of a mere *man*, appears a question involved in such obscurity, that I cannot trace even any indication of that Being having intended me to inquire into it."

If any thing be intended by these observations, it is, that we ought never to attempt to meliorate our condition, till we are perfectly acquainted with its causes. But as the subjects of the worst government are, probably, as ignorant of the train of events for some thousands of years back, as those who enjoy the best, they are to rest contented, it seems, until they can clear up that obscurity, and inquire no farther.

It would seem strange to presume an inference good, from not knowing how we arrived at it. Yet this seems as reasonable, as to suppose the political circumstances of a people fit and proper on account of our inability to trace the causes that produced them. To know the source of an evil, is only of consequence, as it may chance to conduct us to the remedy. But the whole paragraph I have quoted betrays the utmost perplexity of thought; confounding the *civil condition* of individuals with the political institution of a society. The former will be infinitely various in the same community, arising from the different character, temper, and success of its members; the latter unites and pervades the whole, nor can any abuses attach to it, but what may be displayed and remedied.

It is perfectly disingenuous in this author, to represent his adversaries as desirous of committing the business of legislation indiscriminately to the meanest of mankind.* He well knows the

* "A man whose hands and ideas have been usefully confined for thirty or forty years to the labor and management of a farm, or the construction of a wall, or piece of cloth, does indeed, in one respect, appear superior to an infant three months old. The man could make a law of some sort or other; the infant could not. The man could, in any particular circumstances of a nation,

wildest democratical writer contends for nothing more than popular government by *representation*. If the laboring part of the people are not competent to *choose* legislators, the English constitution is essentially wrong; especially in its present state, where the importance of each vote is enhanced by the paucity of the electors.

After the many examples of misrepresentation which this author has furnished, his declamations on the levelling system cannot be matter of surprise. An equality of right is perfectly consistent with the utmost disproportion between the objects to which they extend. A peasant may have the same right to the exertion of his faculties with a Newton; but this will not fill up the vast chasm that separates them.

The ministry will feel great obligations to Mr. Hey, for putting off the evil day of reform to a far distant period,—a period so remote, that they may hope before it is completed, their names and their actions will be buried in friendly oblivion. He indulges a faint expectation, he tells us, that the practice of governments may be improved "*in two or three thousand years.*"

A smaller edition of this work has lately been published, considerably abridged, for the use of the poor, who, it may be feared, will be very little benefited by its perusal. Genius may dazzle, eloquence may persuade, reason may convince; but to render popular, cold and comfortless sophistry, unaided by those powers, is a hopeless attempt.

I have trespassed, I am afraid, too far on the patience of my readers, in attempting to expose the fallacies by which the followers of Mr. Burke perplex the understanding, and endeavor to hide in obscurity the true sources of political power. Were there indeed any impropriety in laying them open, the blame would not fall on the friends of freedom, but on provocation afforded by the extravagance and absurdity of its enemies. If princely power had never been raised to a level with the attributes of the Divinity by Filmer, it had probably never been sunk as low as popular acquiescence by Locke. The confused mixture of liberty and oppression, which ran through the feudal system, prevented the theory of government from being closely inspected; particular rights were secured, but the relation of the people to their rulers was never explained on its just principles, till the transfer of superstition to civil power, shocked the common sense of mankind, and awakened their inquiries. They drew aside the veil, and

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say those words, 'We will go to war;' or, 'We will not go to war:' the infant could not. But the difference between them is more in appearance than in any useful reality. The man is totally unqualified to judge what ought to be enacted for laws."—*Hey*, (p. 31.)

where they were taught to expect a mystery, they discerned a fraud. There is, however, no room to apprehend any evil from political investigation, that will not be greatly overbalanced by its advantages; for besides that truth is always beneficial, tame submission to usurped power has hitherto been the malady of human nature. The dispersed situation of mankind, their indolence and inattention, and the opposition of their passions and interests, are circumstances which render it extremely difficult for them to combine in resisting tyranny with success. In the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of despotism were sown while men slept!* The necessity of regular government, under some form or other, is so pressing, that the evil of anarchy is of short duration. Rapid, violent, destructive in its course, it is an inundation which, fed by no constant spring, soon dries up and disappears. The misfortune on these occasions is, that the people, for want of understanding the principles of liberty, seldom reach the true source of their misery; but after committing a thousand barbarities, only change their masters, when they should change their system.

SECTION V.

On Dissenters.

Of that foul torrent of insult and abuse which it has lately been the lot of the friends of liberty to sustain, a larger portion hath fallen to the share of Dissenters than any other description of men. Their sentiments have been misrepresented, their loyalty suspected, and their most illustrious characters held up to derision and contempt. The ashes of the dead have been as little spared as the merit of the living; and the same breath that has attempted to depreciate the talents and virtues of a Priestley, is employed to blacken the memory of a Price. The effusions of a distempered loyalty are mingled with excecrations on that unfortunate sect; as if the attachment to the King were to be measured by the hatred to Dissenters. Without any shadow of criminality, they are doomed to sustain perpetual insult and reproach; their repose disturbed, and their lives threatened and endangered. If dissent be in truth a crime of such magnitude, that it must not be tolerated, let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law, that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace. It is natural to inquire into the cause of this extreme virulence against a particular class of the community, who are distinguished from others, only by embracing a different form and system of worship.

In the practice of the moral virtues, it will hardly be denied, that they are at least as exemplary as their neighbors; while in the more immediate duties of religion, if there be any distinction, it lies in their carrying to a greater height sentiments of seriousness and devotion. The nature of their *public conduct* will best appear from a rapid survey of some of those great political events in which it has had room to display itself; where, though our history has been ransacked to supply invective, it will be seen, their merits more than compensate for any errors they may have committed. Their zeal in opposing Charles I. has been an eternal theme of reproach; but it should be remembered, that when that resistance first took place, the parliament consisted for the most part of Churchmen, and was fully justified in its opposition, by the arbitrary measures of the court. Had the pretensions of Charles been patiently acquiesced in, our government had long ago been despotic.

What medium might have been found between tame submission and open hostility, and whether matters were not afterwards pushed to an extremity against the unfortunate monarch, it is not for me to determine, nor does it concern the vindication of Dissenters. For long before the final catastrophe which issued in the King's death, the favorable intentions of parliament were overruled by the ascendency of Cromwell; the parliament itself oppressed by his arms, and the influence both of churchmen and dissenters, bent under military usurpation. The execution of Charles was the deed of a faction, condemned by the great body of the puritans as a criminal severity. But whatever blame they may be supposed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles; the merit of restoring monarchy in his son was all their own. The entire force of the empire was in their hands; Monk himself of their party; the parliament, the army all puritans; yet were they disinterested enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reins into his hands, with no other stipulation, than that of liberty of conscience, which he violated with a baseness and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them for the recovery of his power, consisted in depriving two thousand of their ministers, and involving the whole body in a persecution, by which not less than ten thousand are supposed to have perished in imprisonment and want. But their patriotism was not to be shaken by these injuries. When towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign the character of his successor inspired a dread of the establishment of popery, to avert that evil they cheerfully acquiesced in an exclusion from all places of emolument and trust; an extraordinary instance of magnanimity. When James the Second began to display arbitrary views, dissen-

ters were among the first to take the alarm, regarding with jealousy, even an indulgence when it flowed from a dispensing power. The zeal with which they co-operated in bringing about the revolution, the ardor with which they have always espoused its principles, are too well known to need any proof, and can only be rendered more striking by a contrast with the conduct of the high church party. The latter maintained in its utmost extent the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; were incessantly engaged in intrigues to overturn the revolution, and affirmed the doctrine of divine right to be an ancient and indisputable tenet of the English Church. Whoever wishes to ascertain the existence of those arts, by which they embroiled the reign of King William, may see them displayed at large in Burnet's History of his own Times.

The attachment of dissenters to the house of Hanover, was signalized in a manner too remarkable to be soon forgotten. In the rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, they ventured on a breach of the law, by raising and officering regiments out of their own body; for which the parliament were reduced to the awkward expedient of passing an act of indemnity. This short sketch of their political conduct, as it is sufficient to establish their loyalty beyond suspicion, so may it well augment our surprise at the extreme obloquy and reproach with which they are treated. Mr. Hume, a competent judge, if ever there was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to dissenters, candidly confesses that to them we are indebted for the preservation of liberty.

The religious opinions of dissenters are so various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in asserting the rights of conscience against all human control and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at first with a disapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal superstition. Their total separation from the church did not take place for more than a century after; till, despairing of seeing it erected on a comprehensive plan, and being moreover persecuted for their difference of sentiment, they were compelled at last, reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever, a sentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are least likely to disturb the peace of society; for they claim no other liberty than what they wish the whole human race to possess, that of deciding on every question where conscience is concerned.

It is sufferance they plead for, not establishment; protection, not splendor. A disposition to impose their religion on others cannot be suspected in men, whose distinguishing religious tenet, is the disavowal of all human authority.

Their opinion respecting establishments is founded upon reasons which appear to them weighty and solid. They have remarked, that in the three first and purest ages of religion, the church was a stranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid, Christianity never flourished so much as while they were combined to suppress it; and that the protection of Constantine, though well intended, diminished its purity more than it added to its splendor.

The only pretence for uniting Christianity with civil government, is the support it yields to the peace and good order of society. But this benefit will be derived from it, at least in as great a degree, without an establishment as with it. Religion, if it has any power, operates on the *conscience* of men. Resting solely on the belief of invisible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or solemnity from human sanctions; but will appear to the most advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noise and tumults of worldly policy. Can it be imagined that a Dissenter, who believes in divine revelation, does not feel the same moral restraints, as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament? Human laws may debase Christianity, but can never improve it; and being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force.

Happy had it been, however, had civil establishments of religion been *useless* only, instead of being productive of the greatest evils. But when Christianity is established by law, it is requisite to give the preference to some particular system: and as the magistrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his lending his sanction to the false as to the true. Splendor and emolument must likewise be in some degree attached to the national church; which are a strong inducement to its ministers to defend it, be it ever so remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent, and that set of opinions which happens to prevail when the establishment is formed, continues, in spite of superior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the disagreement between the public creed of the church and the private sentiments of its ministers; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmost contempt. Hence the rapid spread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and

never-failing consequence of the corrupt alliance between church and state. Wherever we turn our eyes, we shall perceive the depression of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the establishment had attained the utmost splendor, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is less splendid, more remains of the latter; and in Scotland, whose national church is one of the poorest in the world, a greater sense of religion appears among the inhabitants, than in either of the former. It must likewise be plain to every observer, that piety flourishes much more among Dissenters, than among the members of any establishment whatever. This progress of things is so natural, that nothing seems wanting in any country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels, but a splendid establishment. It will always ultimately debase the clerical character, and perpetuate, both in discipline and doctrine, every error and abuse.

Turn a Christian society into an established church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is little regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendor, opulence, and power, which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of Christianity with civil power, it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions, which left to itself had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood.

Among the evils attending the alliance of Church and State, it is not the least, that it begets a notion of their interests having some kind of inseparable, though mysterious connexion; so that they who are dissatisfied with the one, must be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinctured with this delusion, in which Church and King are blended together with an arrogance that seems copied from Cardinal Wolsey's *Ego et rex meus*, I and my King; as if the establishment were of more consequence than the sovereign who represents the collective majesty of the state. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animosity of sects will subside for want of materials to inflame it, nor will any man suspect his neighbor for being of a different religion, more than for being of a different complexion from himself. The practice of toleration, it is true, has much abated the violence of those convulsions which, for more than a century from the beginning of the Reformation, shook Europe to its base; but the source and spring of intolerance is by no means exhausted. The steam

from that infernal pit will issue through the crevices, until they are filled up with the *ruins* of all human establishments.

The alliance between Church and State is, in a *political point of view*, extremely suspicious, and much better fitted to the genius of an arbitrary than a free government. To the former it may yield a powerful support; to the latter it must ever prove dangerous. The spiritual submission it exacts, is unfavorable to mental vigor, and prepares the way for a servile acquiescence in the encroachments of civil authority. This is so correspondent with *facts*, that the epithet high church, when applied to politics, is familiarly used in our language to convey the notion of arbitrary maxims of government.

As far as submission to civil magistrates is a branch of moral virtue, Christianity will, under every form, be sure to enforce it; for among the various sects and parties into which its profession is divided, there subsists an entire agreement respecting the moral duties it prescribes. To select, therefore, and endow a *particular order* of clergy to teach the duties of submission, is useless, as a means to secure the peace of a society, though well fitted to produce a slavish subjection. Ministers of that description, considering themselves as allies of the state, yet having no civil department, will be disposed on all occasions to strike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any just and reasonable bounds. They will insensibly become an army of spiritual janizaries. Depending, as they every where must, upon the Sovereign, his prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better instruments be contrived for the accomplishment of arbitrary designs. Their compact and united form, composing a chain of various links which hang suspended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying the impression that may soothe, inflame, or mislead the people.

These are the evils which, in my opinion, attach to civil establishments of Christianity. They are indeed often mitigated by the virtue of their members, and among the English clergy in particular, as splendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced, as any which the annals of human nature can afford; but in all our reasonings concerning *men*, we must lay it down as a maxim, that the greater part are moulded by circumstances. If we wish to see the *true spirit* of an hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is usually termed the high church party.

While they had sufficient influence with the legislature, they impelled it to persecute; and now that a more enlightened spirit has brought that expedient into disgrace, they turn to the people,

and endeavor to inflame their minds by the arts of calumny and detraction. When the Dissenters applied for the repeal of the corporation and test acts, an alarm was spread of the church being in danger, and their claim was defeated. From the late opposition of the Bishops to the repeal of the penal statutes, we learn that they have lost the power rather than the inclination to persecute, or they would be happy to abolish the monuments of a spirit they ceased to approve. The nonsense and absurdity comprised in that part of our laws would move laughter in a company of peasants; but nothing is thought mean or contemptible which is capable of being forged into a weapon of hostility against Dissenters. To perpetuate laws which there is no intention to execute, is certainly the way to bring law into contempt; but the truth is, that unwilling to relinquish the right of persecution, though they have no immediate opportunity of exerting it, they retain these statutes as a body in reserve, ready to be brought into the field on the first occasion that shall offer.

The prejudice entertained against us is not the work of a day, but the accumulation of ages, flowing from the fixed antipathy of a numerous and powerful order of men, distributed through all the classes of society; nor is it easy to conceive to what a pitch popular resentment may be inflamed by artful management and contrivance. Our situation in this respect bears a near resemblance to that of primitive Christians, against whom, though in themselves the most inoffensive of mankind, the malice of the populace was directed, to a still greater degree, by similar arts, and upon similar principles. The clamor of the fanatic rabble, the devout execration of Dissenters, will remind the reader of ecclesiastical history of the excesses of pagan ferocity, when the people, instigated by their priests, were wont to exclaim, *christianos ad leones*. There is the less hope of this animosity being allayed, from its having arisen from *permanent causes*. That Christianity is a simple institution, unallied to worldly power; that a church is a voluntary society, invested with a right to choose its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jesus Christ; that ministers are brethren, whose emolument should be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people; are maxims drawn from so high an authority, that it may well be apprehended that the church is doomed to vanish before them. Under these circumstances, whatever portion of talents or of worth Dissenters may possess, serves only to render them more hated, because more formidable. Had they merely revelled with the wanton, and drunk with the drunken; had they been clothed with curses, they might have been honored and esteemed notwithstanding, as true sons of the church; but their dissent is a crime too indelible

in the eyes of their enemies for any virtue to alleviate, or any merit to efface.

Till the test business was agitated, however, we were not aware of our laboring under such a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildness of the times, and conscious that every trace of resentment was vanished from our own breasts, we fondly imagined that those of Churchmen were equally replete with sentiments of generosity and candor. We accordingly ventured on a renewal of our claim as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far, before we were assailed with the bitterest reproaches. The innocent design of relieving ourselves from a disgraceful proscription, was construed by our enemies into an attack on the church and state. Their opposition was both more violent and more formidable than was expected. They let us see, that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of resentment and party spirit, like vestal fire, must never be extinguished in their temples. Calumnies continued to be propagated, till they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever memorable æra in the annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with astonishment and regret, the outrage sustained by philosophy in the most enlightened of countries, and in the first of her sons! When we hear such excesses as these justified and applauded, we seem to be falling back apace into the darkness of the middle ages.

The connexion between civil and religious liberty is too intimate to make it surprising, that they who are attached to the one, should be friendly to the other. The Dissenters have accordingly seldom failed to lend their support to men, who seemed likely to restore the vigor of a sinking constitution. Parliamentary reform has been cherished by them with an ardour equal to its importance. This part of their character inflames opposition still farther; and affords a pretext to their enemies for overwhelming the cause of liberty under an obnoxious name. The reproach on this head, however, is felt as an honor, when it appears by their conduct that they despair of attacking liberty with success, while the reputation of Dissenters remains undiminished. The enmity of the vicious is the test of virtue.

Dissenters are reproached with the appellation of republicans; but the truth of the charge has neither appeared from facts, nor been supported by any reasonable evidence. Among them, as among other classes (and in no greater proportion) there are persons to be found, no doubt, who, without any hostility to the present government prefer in theory a republican to a monarchical form; a point on which the most enlightened men in all ages have entertained very different opinions. In a government like ours, consisting of three simple elements, as this variety of senti-

ment may naturally be expected to take place, so if any predilection be felt toward one more than another, that partiality seems most commendable which inclines to the republican part. At most it is only the love of liberty to excess. The mixture of monarchy and nobility is chiefly of use as it gives regularity, order, and stability to popular freedom. Were we, however, without any proof, to admit that Dissenters are more tinctured with republican principles than others, it might be considered as the natural effect of the absurd conduct of the legislature. Exposed to pains and penalties, excluded from all offices of trust, proscribed by the spirit of the present reign, menaced and insulted wherever they appear, they must be more than men if they felt no resentment, or were passionately devoted to the ruling powers. To expect affection in return for injury, is to gather where they have not scattered, and reap where they have not sown. The superstition of Dissenters is not so abject as to prompt them to worship the constitution through fear. Yet as they have not forgotten the benefits it imparted, and the protection it afforded till of late, they are too much its friends to flatter its defects, or defend its abuses. Their only wish is to see it reformed, and reduced to its original principles.

In recent displays of loyalty they must acknowledge themselves extremely defective. They have never plundered their neighbours to shew their attachment to the King; nor has their zeal for religion ever broke out into oaths and execrations. They have not proclaimed their respect for regular government by a breach of the laws; or attempted to maintain tranquillity by riots. These beautiful specimens of loyalty belong to the virtue and moderation of the high church party alone, with whose character they perfectly correspond.

In a scurrilous paper which has been lately circulated with malignant industry, the Dissenters at large, and Dr. Price in particular, are accused, with strange effrontery, of having involved us in the American war; when it is well known they ever stood aloof from that scene of guilt and blood.

Had their remonstrances been regarded, the calamities of that war had never been incurred; but what is of more consequence in the estimation of anonymous scribblers, there would have remained one lie less to swell the catalogue of their falsehoods.

From the joy which Dissenters have expressed at the French revolution, it has been most absurdly inferred, that they wish for a similar event in England; without considering that such a conclusion is a libel on the British constitution, as it must proceed on a supposition that our government is as despotic as the ancient monarchy of France. To imagine the feelings must be the same,

when the objects are so different, shews a most lamentable degree of malignity and folly.

Encompassed as Dissenters are by calumny and reproach, they have still the satisfaction to reflect, that these have usually been the lot of distinguished virtue; and that in the corrupt state of men's interests and passions, the unpopularity of a cause is rather a presumption of its excellence.

They will be still more happy if the frowns of the world should be the means of reviving that spirit of evangelical piety, which once distinguished them so highly. Content if they can gain protection, without being so romantic as to aspire to praise, they will continue firm, I doubt not, in those principles which they have hitherto acted on, unseduced by rewards, and unshaken by dangers. From the passions of their enemies, they will appeal to the judgement of posterity;—a more impartial tribunal. Above all, they will calmly await the decision of the Great Judge, before whom both they and their enemies must appear, and the springs and scources of their mutual animosity be laid open; when the clouds of misrepresentation being scattered, it will be seen they are a virtuous and oppressed people, who are treading, though with unequal steps, in the path of those illustrious prophets, Apostles, and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy. In the mean time they are far from envying the popularity and applause which may be acquired in a contrary course; esteeming the reproaches of freedom above the splendors of servitude.

SECTION VI.

On the causes of the present discontents.

We have arrived, it is a melancholy truth which can no longer be concealed, we have at length arrived at that crisis, when nothing but speedy and effectual reform can save us from ruin. An amendment in the representation is wanted, as well to secure the liberty we already possess, as to open the way for the removal of those abuses which pervade every branch of the administration. The accumulation of debt and taxes, to a degree unexampled in any other age or country, has so augmented the influence of the crown, as to destroy the equipoise and balance of the constitution. The original design of the funding system which commenced in the reign of King William, was to give stability to the revolution, by engaging the monied interest to embark on its bottom. It immediately advanced the influence of the crown, which the Whigs then exalted as much as possible, as a countervail to the interest of the Pretender.

The mischief of this short-sighted policy cannot be better described than in the language of Bolingbroke. "Few men," says he, "at that time looked forward enough to foresee the consequences of the new constitution of the revenue, that was soon afterward formed; nor of the method of the funding system that immediately took place; which, absurd as they are, have continued since, till it has become scarcely possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the multiplication of taxes, and the creation of funds would increase yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties, by a natural and necessary progression, into a more real, though less, apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution; a due reflection on the experience of other ages and countries, would have pointed out national corruption as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so vast a revenue; and also, the loss of liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption."*

If there be any truth in these reflections, how much must our apprehensions be heightened by the prodigious augmentation of revenue and debt, since the time of George the First. What a harvest has been reaped from the seeds of corruption then sown! —The revenue is now upwards of seventeen millions; and though nine are employed to pay the interest of the national debt, this is small consolation, when we reflect that that debt is the remnant of wasteful, destructive wars, and that till there is a change in the system, we are continually liable to similar calamities. The multiplied channels through which seventeen millions of money must flow into the treasury, the legion of officers it creates, the patronage its expenditure on the several branches of the adminstration supplies, have rendered the influence of the crown nearly absolute and decisive. The control of parliament sinks under this pressure into formality; the balance of the different orders becomes a mere theory, which serves to impose upon ignorance, and varnish corruption. There is no power in the State that can act as a sufficient antagonist to the silent, irresistible force of royal patronage.

The influence of the crown, by means of its revenue, is more dangerous than prerogative, in proportion as corruption operates after a more concealed manner than force. A violent act of prerogative is sensibly felt, and creates an alarm; but it is the nature of corruption to lay apprehension asleep, and to effect its purposes while the forms of liberty remain undisturbed. The first employs force to enslave the people; the second employs the people to enslave themselves. The most determined enemy to freedom

* Letter II. on the Study of History.

can wish for nothing more than the continuance of present abuses. While the semblance of representation can be maintained, while popular delusion can be kept up, he will spare the *extremities* of liberty; he aims at a higher object, that of *striking at the heart.*

A fatal lethargy has long been spreading amongst us, attended, as is natural, with a prevailing disposition both in and out of parliament, to treat plans of reform with contempt. After the accession, place and pension bills were frequently passed by the Commons, though rejected by the Lords; nothing of that nature is now ever attempted. A standing army in time of peace was a subject of frequent complaint, and is expressly provided against by the bill of rights; it is now become a part of the constitution; for though the nominal direction be placed in parliament, the mutiny bill passes as a matter of course, the forces are never disbanded; the more completely to detach them from the community, barracks are erected; and martial law is established in its utmost severity. If freedom can survive this expedient, copied from the practice of foreign despots, it will be an instance of unexampled good fortune. Mr. Hume terms it a mortal distemper in the British constitution, of which it must *inevitably* perish.

To whatever cause it be owing, it is certain the measures of administration have, during the present reign, leaned strongly towards arbitrary power. The decision on the Middlesex election was a blow aimed at the vitals of the constitution. Before the people had time to recover from their panic, they were plunged into the American war—a war of pride and ambition, and ending in humiliation and disgrace. The spirit of the government is so well understood, that the most violent even of the clergy, are content to drop their animosity, to turn their affections into a new channel, and to devote to the house of Hanover, the flattery and the zeal by which they ruined the race of Stuart. There cannot be a clearer symptom of the decay of liberty than the dread of speculative opinions; which is at present carried to a length in this nation that can scarcely be exceeded. Englishmen were accustomed till of late, to make political speculation the amusement of leisure, and the employment of genius;—they are now taught to fear it more than death. Under the torpid touch of despotism, the patriotic spirit has shrunk into a narrow compass; confined to gaze with admiration on the proceedings of parliament, and listen to the oracles of the minister with silent acquiescence, and pious awe. Abuses are sacred, and the pool of corruption must putrify in peace. Persons who a few years back were clamorous for reform, are making atonement for having been betrayed into any appearance of virtue, by a quick return to their natural character.

Is not the kingdom peopled with spies and informers?—Are not inquisitorial tribunals erected in every corner of the land? A stranger, who beholding a whole nation filled with alarm, should inquire the cause of the commotion, would be a little surprised on being informed, that instead of any appearance of insurrection, or plots, a pamphlet had only been published. In a government upheld by so immense a revenue, and boasting a constitution declared to be the envy of the world, this abject distrust of its own power, is more than a million lectures on corruptions and abuses. The wisdom of ages, the master-piece of human policy, complete in all its parts, and that needs no reformation, can hardly support itself against a sixpenny pamphlet, devoid, it is said, of truth or ability! To require sycophants to blush, is exacting too great a departure from the decorum of their character; but common sense might be expected to remain, after shame is extinguished.

Whoever seriously contemplates the present infatuation of the people, and the character of the leaders, will be tempted to predict the speedy downfall of liberty. They cherish the forms, while they repress the spirit of the constitution; they persecute freedom, and adorn its sepulchre. When corruption has struck its roots so deep, it may be doubted whether even the liberty of the press be not of more detriment than advantage. The prints, which are the common sources of information, are replete with falsehood; virtue is calumniated; and scarcely any characters are safe from their blast, except the advocates of corruption. The greater part, no doubt, are in the pay of ministry or their adherents. Thus delusion spreads, and the people are instructed to confound anarchy with reform, their friends with their oppressors.

Who can hear without indignant contempt, the ministers' annual eulogium on the English constitution? Is the parliament so ignorant, then, that it needs to go to school every session, to learn those elements of political knowledge, which every Briton understands? Or is the nature of the British constitution a secret in the breast of the ministry, to be opened with the budget? Indisputable excellence wants no encomium; but this flattery is intended to bury, in an admiration of its merit, all remembrance of its defects. Whatever remains of beauty or vigor it possesses, are held in no estimation but as they produce an acquiescence in abuses. It is its imperfections only ministers admire; its corruptions that solace them. The topics of their encomium are as absurd as the purpose is infamous. The flourishing state of trade and manufactures is displayed in proof of the unequalled excellence of the British constitution, without reflecting that a temporary decay will support with equal force an opposite conclusion. For if we owe our present prosperity to the nature of the government, our recent

calamities must be traced to the same source, and that constitution which is now affirmed to be the best, must be allowed, during the American war, to have been the worst. That there is a connexion between commercial prosperity and the nature of a government must be admitted; but its operation is gradual and slow, not felt from year to year, but to be traced by the comparison of one age and country with another. But allowing that our wealth may increase along with the increase of abuses, the nation we hope is not so sordid as to look upon wealth as the supreme good, however well that idea may correspond with the views of a ministry, who seem determined to leave us no other. Freedom, as it animates industry by securing its rewards, opens a path to wealth; but if that wealth be suffered to debase a people, and render them venal and dependant, it will silently conduct them back again to misery and depression. Rome was never more opulent than on the eve of departing liberty. Her vast wealth was a sediment that remained on the reflux of the tide. It is quite unnecessary to remind the reader how all this at present is reversed, and that the unbounded prodigality of Mr. Pitt and his successors, in the conduct of the war, which the corruption of parliament enabled them to maintain, has plunged the nation into the deepest abyss of poverty and distress.

It is singular enough, but I hope not ominous, that the flattery bestowed by the poets of antiquity on the ruling powers, resembles in every thing but its elegance, the adulation of modern sycophants. The extent of empire, the improvement of arts, the diffusion of opulence and splendor, are the topics with which Horace adorned the praises of Augustus; but the penetration of Tacitus develops amidst these flattering appearances, the seeds of ruin. The florid bloom but ill concealed that fatal malady which preyed upon the vitals.

Between the period of national honor and complete degeneracy, there is usually an interval of national vanity, during which, examples of virtue are recounted and admired, without being imitated. The Romans were never more proud of their ancestors than when they ceased to resemble them. From being the freest and most high-spirited people in the world, they suddenly fell into the tamest and most abject submission. Let not the name of Britons, my countrymen, too much elate you; nor ever think yourselves safe, while you abate one jot of that holy jealousy by which your liberties have been hitherto secured. The richer the inheritance bequeathed you, the more it merits your care for its preservation. The possession must be continued by that spirit with which it was at first acquired; and as it was gained by vigilance, it will be lost by supineness. A degenerate race repose on

the merit of their forefathers; the virtuous create a fund of their own. The former look back upon their ancestors to hide their shame; the latter look forward to posterity to levy a tribute of admiration. In vain will you confide in the forms of a free constitution. Unless you reanimate those forms with fresh vigor, they will be melancholy memorials of what you once were, and haunt you with the shade of departed liberty. A silent stream of corruption poured over the whole land, has tainted every branch of the administration with decay. On your temperate, but manly exertions, depend the happiness and freedom of the latest posterity. That assembly which sits by right of representation, will be little inclined to oppose your will expressed in a firm, decisive manner. You may be deafened by clamor, misled by sophistry, or weakened by division; but you cannot be despised with impunity. A vindictive ministry may hang the terrors of criminal prosecution over the heads of a few with success; but at their peril will they attempt to intimidate a nation. The trick of associations, of pretended plots, and silent insurrections, will oppose a feeble barrier to the impression of the popular mind.

The theory of the constitution in the most important particulars is a satire on the practice. The theory provides the responsibility of ministers as a check to the execution of ill designs; but in reality we behold the basest of the tribe retreat from the ruin of their country, loaded with honors and with spoils. Theory tells us the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the mistake by shewing its subservience to the crown. We learn from the first, that the legislature is chosen by the unbiassed voice of all who can be supposed to have a will of their own; we learn from the last, the pretended electors are but a handful of the people, who are never less at their own disposal than in the business of election. The theory holds out equal benefits to all, and equal liberty, without any other discrimination, than that of a good and bad subject; its practice brands with proscription and disgrace a numerous class of inhabitants on account of their religion. In theory, the several orders of the state are a check on each other; but corruption has oiled the wheels of that machinery, harmonized its motions, and enabled it to bear with united pressure on the happiness of the people.

The principal remedy for the diseases of the state is undoubtedly a reform in parliament; from which, as a central point, inferior improvements may issue; but as I have already treated on that subject at large, I shall not insist on it here. I cannot close this pamphlet, however, without adverting for a moment to a few of the principal objects which well merit the attention of the legislature.

On the abuses in the church, it is to little purpose to expatiate, as they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unless it be a maxim that honesty will endanger her existence, her creeds ought in all reason to correspond with the sentiments of her members. The world, it is to be feared, will be little edified by the example of a church, which, in compelling its ministers to subscribe opinions that few of them believe, is a discipline of fraud. Nor is the collection of tithes calculated to soften the odium. As a mode of union with the parishioners, they are fruitful of contention; as a restraint on the improvement of land, impolitic and oppressive; as a remnant of the Jewish law, superstitious and absurd. True magnanimity would instruct the clergy to recede from a claim which they will probably be compelled shortly to relinquish. But no reform, it seems, must take place in the church any more than in the state, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progress of its ally.

The condition of the poor in this country calls for compassion and redress. Many of them, through the want of mental improvement are sunk almost beneath the level of humanity; and their hard-earned pittance is so diminished by taxes, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can nourish their children, and utterly impossible to afford them education. The poor laws enacted for their relief, by confining their industry to a particular spot, and denying them the privilege of residing where they may exert it to the greatest advantage, are an accumulated oppression. Were industry allowed to find its level, were the poor laws abolished, and a small proportion of that expense which swells the tide of corruption, the splendors of the great, and the miseries of war, bestowed on the instruction of the common people, the happy effects would descend to the remotest posterity, and open a prospect which humanity might delight to anticipate. In England we have been adding wheel to wheel, and spring to spring, till we have rendered the machine of government far too complicated; forgetting in the midst of wars, negotiations and factious disputes, that the true end of civil polity is the happiness of the people. We have listened to every breeze that moves along the surface of Europe, and descried danger from afar; while deaf to the complaints of the poor, we have beheld ignorance, wretchedness, and barbarity multiply at home, without the smallest regard. Is it possible to behold with patience the numberless tribe of placemen, pensioners and sycophants, who are enriched at the public expense; a noxious spawn engendered by the corruptions of government, and nourished by the diseases? Were our immense revenue conducive to the maintenance of royal dignity, or proportioned to the exigencies of the state, it would be borne with pleasure; but at present, it bids fair to be the purchase of our servitude.

Our laws, in order to become a proper rule of civil life, much want revision and amendment. They are moreover never promulgated. For this omission, Judge Blackstone assigns a very curious reason. "That being enacted by our representatives, every man is supposed in the eye of the law, to be present in the legislature." It would be an improvement on this delegated knowledge of the law, if the penalty were also delegated; and criminals punished by representation. The laws in their present state, are so piled into volumes, encumbered with precedents, and perplexed with intricacies, that they are often rather a snare than a guide, and are a fruitful source of the injustice they are intended to prevent. The expense is as formidable as the penalty; nor is it to any purpose to say they are the same to the poor as to the rich, while by their delay, expense and perplexity, they are placed on an eminence, which opulence only can ascend. The commendation bestowed by foreigners so liberally on English jurisprudence was never meant to be extended to our municipal code, which is confused, perplexed, and sanguinary in the extreme; but to the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality which marks the conduct of judges. For want of gradual improvements, to enable it to keep pace with the progress of society, the most useful operations of law are clouded by fictions.*

These are a few only of the maladies which indicate a bad habit of the political body; nor can a true estimate be made of our situation so much by adverting to *particular evils*, as by an attention to the general aspect of affairs. The present crisis is, in my apprehension, the fullest of terror and of danger we have ever experienced. In the extension of excise laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined adherence to abuses displayed by parliament, in the desertion of pretended patriots, the spread of arbitrary principles, the tame, subdued spirit of the nation, we behold the seeds of political ruin quickening into life. The *securities* of liberty, as was long since remarked by Dr. Price, have given way; and what remains is little more than an *indulgence* which cannot continue long, when it ceases to be cherished in the affections of the people. The little of public virtue that still subsists, is no match for disciplined armies of corruption. The people are perishing for lack of knowledge. Disquieted by imaginary alarms, insensible to the real danger that awaits them, they are taught to court that servitude, which will be a source of misery to themselves, and to posterity.

Deplorable as the prospect is, a precarious hope may be founded, perhaps, on the magnitude of abuses. There is, it has often

* See an excellent publication on this subject, entitled, "Juridical Essays," by Mr. Randall.

been remarked, an ultimate point both of elevation and depression in the affairs of kingdoms, to which when they arrive, they begin to turn of their own accord, and to fall back into their ancient channels. We are certainly entitled to all the comfort that consideration is capable of affording. Taxation can hardly be more oppressive, representation more venal and inadequate, the influence of the people more extinguished, or falsehood and deception more triumphant, than they are at present.

There is also another circumstance attending the present crisis, which, if we are wise enough to improve it, may be of the utmost advantage. Of the numberless political parties which have hitherto distracted our attention, and divided our attachment, there now remain but two, the patrons of corruption, and the friends of liberty; they who are waiting for the disorders of government to ripen into arbitrary power; and they who are anxious to bring back the constitution to its original principles. The colors by which they are distinguished are too bold and strong to be ever confounded; or if there could be any possible embarrassment in the choice, the ministry have condescended to remove that obscurity, by pursuing an interest not only distinct from, but directly opposed to that of the people. The clamor of Whigs and Tories hath happily subsided; and pretended patriots are at length so kind as to unmask before the people, and stand forth in their native character, the objects of just detestation. We cannot wish for better lessons of public virtue than are furnished by the contrast of their vices.

On the present war, until the views of the ministry are more unfolded, it behoves me to speak with tenderness and reserve. If nothing more be intended than the maintenance of national honor, and the faith of treaties, it will merit the warmest support of every well wisher to his country. But if the re-establishment of the ancient government of France be any part of the object; if it be a war with freedom, a confederacy of Kings against the rights of man; it will be the last humiliation and disgrace that can be inflicted on Great Britain; and were there any truth in tales of incantation, to behold us engaged in such a cause, were enough to disturb the repose of our ancestors, and move the ashes of the dead! The steps preparatory to the war, the inflamed passions, and the character of our allies, afford an ill omen of the temper with which it will be conducted. The pretence respecting the Netherlands certainly entitles the ministry to the praise of consistence. It is quite of a piece with the candor and sincerity which affirmed the balance of Europe to be destroyed by the seizure of Oczakow, but denied it was endangered by the conquest of Poland, and the invasion of France.

The French revolution we cannot but remember was from the first an object of jealousy to ministers. There needed not the late unhappy excesses, the massacres of September, and the execution of Louis, to excite or display their hostility. It appeared in the insult and derision of their retainers, from the highest to the lowest. If they meant fairly to the interests of general liberty, why that uneasiness at the fall of despotism in a neighboring country? Why render parliament a theatre of abuse on a revolution, whose commencement was distinguished by unexampled mildness and tranquillity? But this part of their conduct was likewise consistent. Intent on the destruction of liberty in one country, they were disconcerted at seeing it revive in another; and before they ventured to extinguish the dying taper, waited for the surrounding scene to be shut up in darkness. I am perfectly aware that to speak in terms of decency and respect of the French revolution, is to incur in the prevailing disposition of the times the last of infamies. If we dare to rejoice at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom, it must be at the peril of the foulest imputations that imagination can invent, or malignity apply. In contempt, however, of these calumnies, I am free to confess, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does still appear, the most splendid event recorded in the annals of history. The friends of liberty contemplate the crimes and disorders with which it has been stained* with the deepest regret; but they still hope that they will in the result be more than compensated, by the grandeur of its principles, and the beneficence of its effects. Instead of wishing for a similar event in England, they are intent on reform, chiefly to avoid that necessity. Under every *form* of government, they know how to recognize the divine aspect of freedom, and without it can be satisfied with none. The evils of anarchy and of despotism are two extremes which they equally dread; and between which no middle path can be found, but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either side, the streams of corruption must be drained off, the independence of parliament restored, the ambition of aristocracy repressed, and the majesty of the people lift itself up. It is possible to retreat from the brink of a precipice, but wo to that nation which sleeps upon it!

* The execution of the King was certainly a most cruel and unjustifiable transaction, alike repugnant to law, order, and humanity. Without being conducive to any views of policy whatever, it seems to have been merely a gratification of the most detestable passions. The treatment of the beautiful and unfortunate Queen, and of the royal family, is barbarous and unmanly in the extreme. When we look at their sufferings, humanity weeps, and pity forgets their crimes.

A

REPLY

TO

A REVIEW IN THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN,

JAN. 1822,

OF

"AN APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AND FOR GENERAL LIBERTY, &c."

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LEICESTER JOURNAL.

A REPLY.

To the Editor of the Leicester Journal.

Sir,

A violent attack on my character having appeared in your paper a very few weeks since, contained in an extract from a periodical work, entitled *The Christian Guardian*, I rely on your impartiality for permitting me to repel the accusation through the same medium. If the misrepresentations which I have to complain of had been confined within the bounds of decency, I should have consulted my ease by remaining silent; but the writer, whoever he is, has availed himself of the impunity attached to anonymous communications so unsparingly, that I might be justly charged, not only with a criminal indifference to character, but with being accessory to the delusion of the public, were I to make no reply.

The amount of my offence consists in uttering a new edition of a political pamphlet, which made its first appearance many years since, and passed through several editions. This writer says I might have suppressed it, but the contrary is the fact. The term of copyright is well known to extend to fourteen years, after which any one is at liberty to republish a work without the consent of the Author. More than that time had elapsed since the last edition, and as it was at the option of any bookseller to reprint it, so I was assured from various quarters, that, whether I consented or not, it would certainly be republished. The only alternative that remained was, either to suffer it to come forth, in a form perhaps most incorrect and mingled with foreign infusions, or to publish it under my own eye, and with such alterations and corrections as the Author might deem proper. The latter was preferred, and for this a torrent of invective has issued from *The Christian Guardian.*

It certainly is very unusual for a writer to suppress his own publications, unless he has recanted the principles they contain.

To persevere in doing so, naturally exposes him to the suspicion, either that he has renounced his former opinions, or that he is afraid to avow them. But neither of these situations is mine; I have changed no principle, and I feel no fear. Why then should I act in such a manner as must render me perpetually liable to either of these imputations? For a considerable time indeed, after loud and repeated importunities, I declined a compliance with the wishes expressed for republication, from a sincere reluctance to engage in political controversy. By one party, in the mean while, it was my fortune to be so unequivocally claimed as a convert, and by the other so assailed with reproaches as an apostate, that I was convinced by experience there was no other way of putting an end to the misrepresentations of both, but to republish the original pamphlet. Had I never written it, the same motives which made me reluctant to reprint, might probably have prevented my writing it; but since there is not a principle in it which I can conscientiously retract, and my silence has occasioned numerous misrepresentations and mistakes, the fair and manly part was doubtless to republish it. An ingenuous mind is not less ashamed of receiving praises it is conscious it has not deserved, than indignant at reproaches which are not merited.

But a Minister of the Gospel, it seems, is on no occasion to meddle with party politics. How exactly this maxim was adhered to at the commencement of the late war, when military banners were consecrated, and the people every where summoned to arms

> By pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
> Beat with fist instead of a stick,

must be fresh in the recollection of my readers. The men who in the garb of Clergymen bustle at electioneering meetings, forsooth, are not really such, but merely assume the disguise of that holy order; since it would be uncandid to suppose they can so universally lose sight of what is befitting Ministers of the Gospel. The venerable Bench of Bishops who sit in the House of Lords, either attend in silent pomp, without taking any part in the deliberations, or they violate the character of Ministers of the Gospel. We must have been grossly imposed upon by the public prints which informed us of the clergy of a whole Archdeaconry, or Diocese, meeting to petition Parliament against the Catholic Claims; since they could never with one consent depart so far from the decorum of Ministers of the Gospel.

The plain state of the case is, not that the writer is offended at my meddling with politics, but that I have meddled on the wrong side. Had the same mediocrity of talent been exerted in eulogizing the measures of ministry, his greetings would have been as loud as

his invective is bitter. But it was exerted to expose public abuses, to urge the necessity of Reform, and to lay open the tergiversation of the Heaven-born Minister and Sunday duellist, who, after devoting the day of rest to deeds of blood, has by a strange fatality, obtained a sort of political beatification. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

Another head of accusation is, that I have censured the character of Bishop Horsley, whose character, the Reviewer tells us, is far removed beyond my attack, while I have eulogized Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, Socinians. To this it is sufficient to reply, that Dr. Price was *not* a Socinian, but an Arian: he wrote professedly in confutation of Socinianism; and though I disapprove of his religious principles, I feel no hesitation in affirming, in spite of the frantic and unprincipled abuse of Burke, that a more ardent and enlightened friend of his country never lived, than that venerable patriarch of freedom. Such were the sentiments of the worshipful Corporation of London, who in token of their esteem presented him with the freedom of the City in a golden box: such was the judgement of Mr. Pitt, who long professed himself his admirer, and condescended to seek his advice on questions of finance. Dr. Priestley it is acknowledged, was a Socinian; but it was not under that character that he was eulogized. It was as the friend of liberty, the victim of intolerance, and the author of some of the most brilliant philosophical discoveries of modern times, for which he was celebrated throughout Europe, and his name enrolled as a member of the most illustrious institutions; so that my eulogy was but a mere feeble echo of the applause which resounded from every civilized portion of the globe. And are we suddenly fallen back into the darkness and ignorance of the middle ages, during which the spell of a stupid and unfeeling uniformity bound the nations in iron slumbers, that it has become a crime to praise a man for talents which the whole world admired, and for virtues which his enemies confessed, merely because his religious creed was erroneous? If any thing could sink Orthodoxy into contempt, it would be its association with such Gothic barbarity of sentiment, such reptile meanness. What renders the wretched bigotry of the Reviewer the more conspicuous is, that the eulogy in question was written almost immediately after the Birmingham riots, that disgraceful ebullition of popular frenzy, during which a ferocious mob tracked his steps like bloodhounds, demolished his house, destroyed his library and apparatus, and advancing from thence to the destruction of private and public buildings, filled the whole town and vicinity with terror and dismay. What sort of a *Christian Guardian* the Reviewer would have proved on that occasion, may be easily inferred from

his passing over these atrocities in silence, while he discharges his malice on their unoffending victim.

The maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, admits of exceptions; and as I am vilified for censuring Bishop Horsley, whose character, it is affirmed, is far removed beyond my attack, while I praised Priestley the Socinian, justice compels me to remark, (what the Reviewer probably knows well enough,) that in the virtues of private life, Dr. Priestley was as much superior to his antagonist, as he was inferior in the correctness of his speculative theology.

From the principles avowed in the *Apology*, this writer asserts that it is evident I am to be classed to all intents and purposes with *Radical Reformers*. This charge is grounded on my recommendation of Annual Parliaments and universal suffrage. Now he either knows that Mr. Pitt, in conjunction with the Duke of Richmond, presided at public meetings, in which annual parliaments and the extension of the right of suffrage to all householders were recommended, or he does not. If he pleads ignorance of the fact, what presumption is it for a man so uninformed to write upon the subject. If he knows it, let me ask, Was Mr. Pitt a *Radical Reformer* at the time he recommended those measures? If he was, I plead guilty to the charge; but if he was *not*, the recommendation of a similar plan is no evidence of my being a *Radical*. For my own part, I feel the utmost contempt of the charge of Radicalism. A Radical Reformer, if we attend to the import of the words, is one that goes to the *root* of the evil, that proposes not merely to palliate, but to extirpate it. And what is that reform worth that proposes less? He who labors under an inveterate malady wishes for a *radical* cure; he would put little value on a remedy that should mitigate the pain, without reaching the source of the disorder. If the appellation of *Radical Reformer* is intended to denote a Revolutionist, it is most absurdly applied to the advocate of annual parliaments and universal suffrage; because the first of these measures is merely a revival of the ancient practice, and the latter most consonant to the genius of a free Constitution, which presupposes the extension of the elective franchise to all who can be presumed to have a will of their own; the exercise of this right, coupled with the practice of voting by ballot, would in my humble opinion, be the best expedient for securing the freedom and tranquillity of elections. Be this as it may, a sincere proposal of *Reform* must differ essentially from the proposal of a revolution. If by styling me a *Radical* Reformer, this writer intends to impute revolutionary views, I say it is a calumny and a falsehood; and I challenge him to produce a single sentence from my publications, which sustains such a charge, or which convicts me of hostility to the existing or-

der of things, as consisting of King, Lords, and Commons. But if he means, that I ask for such a Reform as will cut up corruption by the roots, I feel no inclination to disavow it. He wishes, it is evident, to fix the impression that I am hostile to the regal branch of the Constitution; but shrinks from making the assertion, and endeavors to convey the venom of his accusations through the subtle vehicle of a dark and ambiguous phraseology.

For what purpose, but that of exciting hatred and horror, he has thought fit to couple my name with the mention of Hone and Carlile, it is not easy to conjecture. The blasphemy of their publications is quite as disgusting to me as to himself; but I am at a loss to conceive the justness of that reasoning which would infer that no political corruption however enormous, no mal-administration however flagrant, must be exposed to animadversion, until these men have ceased to exhale their impieties. Let this principle once be admitted, and we shall never want Hones and Carliles in abundance; to remove a shield so easily purchased, and so effectual in the protection of every abuse, might be deemed an infatuation.

"He (the Author of the Apology) pleads," says the Reviewer, "for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, for the unfettered publication of every kind of blasphemy, for the exclusion of the relatives of Noblemen from the House of Commons, for the overthrow of all ecclesiastical establishments, and for the sovereignty of the people. In what part of the sacred volume," he adds, "he has discovered the least sanction for any one of these notions, we are at a loss to imagine." The fatuity of this remark baffles all description. For why may I not retort his own language, and say—This author pleads for septennial parliaments, for limited suffrage, for the admission of the relatives of Noblemen to the House of Commons, and for the support of ecclesiastical establishments; but in what part of the sacred volume he finds the least sanction for them I am at a loss to imagine. But when did I plead for the publication of blasphemy, fettered or unfettered? To plead for the liberty of divulging speculative opinions, is one thing, and to assert the right of uttering blasphemy, is another. For blasphemy, which is the speaking contumeliously of God, is not a speculative error; it is an overt act; a crime which no state should tolerate. In relation to the question of ecclesiastical establishments, since I am challenged to produce any passage from Scripture, which sanctions my opposition to them, I beg leave to refer him to our Lord's declaration, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." That *national* churches, or exclusive establishments of religion by the civil magistrate, are one of these plants, will not be denied, since

nothing of that kind, it is universally allowed, existed during the three first and purest ages of Christianity, and not being authorized by the great Head of the church, it must, if we believe him, be rooted up. I have used the term *great* Head of the church, by way of distinction from that *little* Head which the Church of England has invented, and on which, whether it be a beauty or a deformity in the body of Christ, the Scriptures are certainly as silent, as on universal suffrage and annual parliaments.

It may not be improper in this place to notice a curious argument, which the Reviewer adduces in support of his darling tenet of passive obedience and non-resistance, from the prevailing and inherent depravity of human nature. He reminds us that mankind are represented in Scripture as "alike depraved and unruly," and from these premises attempts to enforce that interpretation of Scripture which would annihilate the liberties of mankind, and reduce them without "restriction or reservation" to a passive submission to their political superiors. On another occasion, I have sufficiently rescued the sentiments of the inspired writers from such a detestable imputation, by showing that their design is merely to inculcate the general duty of obedience to government, as the ordinance of God, while they leave the just bounds of authority, and the limits of obedience, to the regulation and adjustment of reason and experience; a task to which they are perfectly adequate. But how does the depravity of human nature evince the necessity of passive obedience and non-resistance, unless it is contended that the ruling part of mankind are *not* depraved? That mankind are naturally "depraved and unruly" affords a good argument for the existence of *government itself*; but since they are "*alike* depraved and unruly," since governors partake of the same corruption as the people, aggravated too often by the possession of power, which inflames the passions and corrupts the heart, to allege the depravity of human nature as a reason for submission to arbitrary power, involves the absurdity of supposing that the cure of one degree of wickedness is to be obtained by affording unlimited license to a greater. Retrace the annals of all times and nations, and you will find in the triumph of despotism the triumph of wickedness; you will find that men have been virtuous, noble, and disinterested, just in proportion as they have been free.

The Reviewer affects to triumph over me, on account of the supposed failure of the prediction, that ruin would speedily ensue, unless prevented by reform. "Has this dreadful alternative," he asks, "fallen upon us? The present comparatively prosperous and improving circumstances of the kingdom answer, No. The general state of the country, the average condition of the great mass of the people, is *better*, and not *worse*, than at the time when Mr. Hall first published this direful presage."

I am at a loss to reply in suitable terms to a writer who seems to glory in setting truth at defiance. Let me ask the reader, whether he thinks there is a single person to be found in the nation, who really believes our condition as a people is improved within the last thirty years. Where is this improvement to be found? Is it in the augmentation of the national debt to three times its former amount, in the accumulated weight of taxes, in the increase of the poor-rates, in the depression of land to less than one half of its former value, in the ruin of the agricultural interest, in the thousands and tens of thousands of farmers who are distrained for rent, and they and their families reduced to beggary? Has this writer already forgotten the recent distress of the manufacturing class, who, from failure of employment and the depression of wages, were plunged into despair, while numbers of them quitted their homes, and sought a precarious and scanty relief, by dragging through the country loaded wagons and carts, like beasts of burden? Is it in the rapid and portentous multiplication of crimes, by which our prisons are glutted with malefactors? If these are indications of increasing prosperity, we may justly adopt the language of the liturgy, From such prosperity, "good Lord deliver us."

To do the writer justice, he has the grace to admit something like an exception respecting the agricultural interest, though he expresses himself with the diffidence becoming the solution of so difficult a problem. "If any exception," he says, "can be found, it is in the agricultural interest;" but, he adds, "if those are to be believed, "*who ought to be judges*, this is to be ascribed to the want of legislative protection." Now two corn-bills have been passed of late years, for the express protection of the agriculturist; the last of these in open contempt of the sentiments and wishes of the people. Previous to the passing of these bills, agriculture was in a comparatively flourishing state; since these laws were enacted, it has experienced a depression beyond all example; and in the face of these facts, this writer has the assurance to inform us, that in the opinion of those *who ought to be judges*, the evil is wholly to be ascribed to the *want* of legal protection. But who are these highly privileged mortals, who are to be implicitly believed because "they ought to be judges?" If there is any class of persons, whose opinion on these questions is entitled to deference and respect, they are undoubtedly political economists, men who have made the sources of national wealth the principal subject of their inquiry; and where will he find one, from Adam Smith, to the present time, who has not reprobated the interference of legislature with the price of corn? To say nothing of the reasoning of that great philosopher, which is unanswerable, com-

mon sense will teach us that laws to raise the price of produce are unjust and oppressive taxes upon the whole community, for the exclusive benefit of a part. There is a description of men, who are accustomed systematically to yield up their understandings to others, who in their view "ought to be judges." It is needless to add, that the present writer is evidently of this *servum pecus*, this tame and passive herd, and that his knowledge of the subject is just what might be expected from one who thinks by proxy. These men, forgetting, or affecting to forget, that the exercise of power, in whatever hands it is placed, will infallibly degenerate into tyranny, unless it is carefully watched, make it their whole business to screen its abuses, to suppress inquiry, stifle complaint, and inculcate on the people, as their only duty, a quiet and implicit submission to the direction of those, who, to speak in the vocabulary of slaves, "ought to be judges." These are the men by whom the constitution is endangered; these are the maxims by which free states are enslaved. If that freedom which is the birthright of Britons is destined to go down to succeeding generations, it must result from the prevalence of an opposite spirit, a lofty enthusiasm, an ardent attachment to liberty, and an incessant jealousy of the tendency of power to enlarge its pretensions and extend its encroachments.

The Reviewer asserts, that "the whole pamphlet is an argument in favor of the supremacy and infallibility of the people, and of the necessity of paying an implicit obedience to the least expression of their will."

This, I must assure the reader, is a gross and wilful misrepresentation. In no part of the pamphlet have I pleaded for any such doctrine. All that I have asserted is, that in proportion as *the House of Commons* is in unison with the people, animated by the same sympathies, and affected by the same interests, in the same proportion will it accomplish the design of its functions as a *representative* assembly, and that a reform is absolutely necessary, in order to restore it to that conjunction of interests and feelings, on which its utility as the popular branch of the legislature depends. The necessity of such an union between the people and their Representatives, is manifest from the very meaning of the terms; for it were quite needless for them to be at the pains of choosing men, who, in consequence of a foreign bias, are prepared to contradict their sentiments and neglect their interests. A House of Commons which should chiefly consist of Court sycophants and tyrants, would exhibit nothing more than the mockery of representation. By artfully transferring what I have said of *one* branch of the legislature to the *whole*, and presenting even that in an aggravated form, he has represented me as reducing

the government to such an immediate and incessant dependance on the popular will as never entered my thoughts, and would be utterly incompatible with the genius of a limited monarchy.

Having already trespassed on the patience of my readers, I shall close with one remark on the eulogium pronounced by the Reviewer on the character of the late Mr. Pitt. He appears to be extremely shocked with the freedom and severity of my strictures on his conduct, as implying a forgetfulness of his singular disinterestedness and his "perfect devotion to his country." As this has become a favorite topic with the admirers of that celebrated minister, it is necessary to remind them that there are other vices besides the love of money, and other virtues besides that of dying poor. It may be easily admitted that the ambition which grasps at the direction of an empire, and the pitiful passion for accumulation, were not the inmates of the same bosom. In minds of a superior order, ambition, like Aaron's rod, is quite sufficient to swallow up the whole fry of petty propensities. Far be it from me to withhold an atom of the praise justly due to him. That he devoted much time, and a considerable portion of talent, to the affairs of his country, is undeniable. The evils which he has brought upon us were not the production of an ordinary mind, nor the work of a day, nor done in sport; but what I contend for is, that, to say nothing of his unparalleled apostasy, his devotion to his country, and what was worse, its devotion to him, have been the source of more calamity to this nation, than any other event that has befallen it, and that the memory of PITT will be identified in the recollection of posterity with accumulated taxes, augmented debt, extended pauperism, a debasement and prostration of the public mind, and a system of policy, not only hostile to the cause of liberty at home, but prompt and eager to detect and tread out every spark of liberty in Europe; in a word, with all those images of terror and destruction, which the name imports. The enthusiasm with which his character is regarded by a numerous class of his countrymen will be ascribed by a distant age, to that mysterious infatuation which, in the inscrutable counsels of Heaven, is the usual, the destined precursor of the fall of states.

I am, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

Leicester, Feb. 5, 1822. ROBERT HALL.

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Hall, Robert

The works of the Rev. Rob't Hall

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